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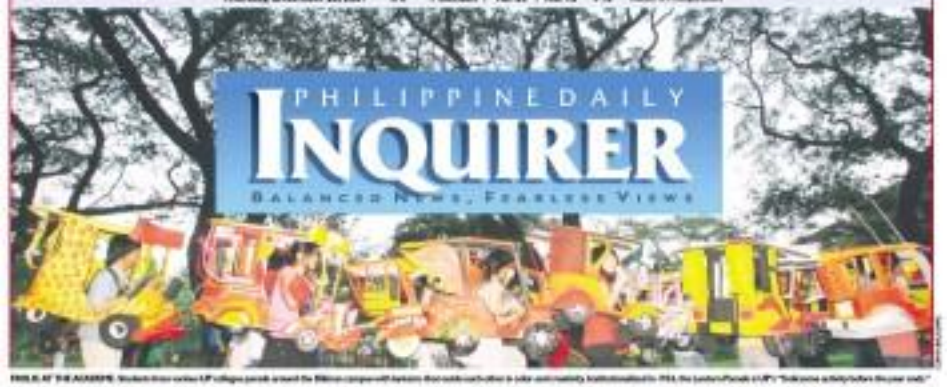
PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS



GMA's ₱30-B 'pork' hit

It ain't over yet, farmers warned

By Norman Bordadora, Michael Lim Ubac and Jerome Aning

THE DISPUTED LAND IN SUMilao, Bulacan, may still slip beyond the grasp of the former claimants because of the political alliance between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Sen. Miguel Zubiri, chair Edwardo "Sandeng" Gonzalez.

This was the warning aired yesterday by Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo in the wake of Mr. Arroyo's executive order authorizing the reclassification of the 144 hectare property from agro-industrial to agricultural and its retention in coverage of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

In a statement, Ocampo said the "political collusion" be-

IT AIN'T OVER IN AL

SEALED WITH A KISS

While a gallery of military officers gets in approval, Rep. Monina Prieto-Rodero kisses his wife husband Defense Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro Jr. after his appointment was confirmed at the Senate on Wednesday. Teodoro was confirmed together with DENR Secretary Lopezmata Cabral and Trade Secretary Peter Favila. Nine others were bypassed. (Story on Page A4.)

Deadlock looms on nat'l budget

By DJC. Calleseran Jr.

WITH JUST TWO DAYS BEfore Congress goes on a Christmas break, the 2008 budget could be headed for a deadlock as administration and opposition lawmakers on the bicameral committee lock horns on the estimated ₱30 billion in "pork barrel" of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Sen. Ferdie Lacson said the budget allocations that offer the President "much-close room" in determining the amount and the beneficiary ratchet the mandatory audit rules could be the "killer provision" in the proposed ₱1.237 trillion General Appropriations Act of 2008.

"I think this is where all the arguments in the bicameral meeting will narrow down to—Is the President willing to cut down her funds at her disposal and look at those funds in social services like health and education?"

DEADLOCK IN AS

Pampanga Gov Ed still awaits receipt

By Tonyo Cruz
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—IF THE controversial ₱500,000 cash gift given to Pampanga Gov. Eddie Panlilio at Malacañang on Oct. 11 really came from the League of Provinces of the Philippines

PAMPANGA A2

Talk rife Malacañang mulling over extension of Esperon term

By Nicole Paja

DESPITE TALK OF AN EXTENsion soon for General Hermogenes Esperon Jr., one of the three names for the post is not the least bit worried.

Speaking with reporters yesterday at the AFP Medical Center, Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano said he was "too focused" on his job as commanding general of the Philippine Army (CGPA) to worry about the matter.

But sources in the Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Esperon is ready to retire on Feb. 9, when he turns 56, the military's mandatory retirement age.

TALK RIFE A2

236 lawmakers receive ₱200,000 bonus each

By Christian Supatra and Norman Bordadora

CONGRESSMEN WILL HAVE THEIR pockets full when they go on their holiday break starting Saturday.

Each of the 236 lawmakers gets up to ₱200,000 every Christmas for staff bonuses, said Rhoda Gerochi of Rep. Herminia Ramirez and Georgelin Reyes-Ibarrola, chair and vice chair, respectively of the House committee on accounts.

This is to approximate the ₱50,000 given as Christmas bonuses to all national government employees and to

236 LAWMAKERS A8

GUIDING HANDS. Rodolfo Reyes, 71, helps Nicomedes Ruiz in the final hours before their release. Both are natives of Leyte but live only not in jail. (Story on Page A2.)

Santiago wake: Drama at Forbes Park unfolding

By Thelma San Juan

AS LIFESTYLE ICON SHIRLEY SANTIAGO lies in a chapel at Sacramento de San Antonio in Makati City, a full-scale drama surrounding his death continues unfold.

It's a drama where actors and crew and cast of characters (Santiago himself, who was known for theatrical flourish, would have found riveting.

Tuesday night, on the second day of the wake for Santiago who was found dead early Sunday morning in his Pasay apartment, the Santiago chapel was awash with news that police were zoning in several top suspects who were right there at the wake.

SANTIAGO A2

JOY ON JOY. Mary Joy Gonzales, born without arms and legs, receives check and cash gifts from Miss Arroyo at the Arroyo-owned LTA building.

Fa la la la la: Long Christmas, New Year holidays

A FOUR-DAY CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY and a four-day New Year holiday await employees in the government and private sectors.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita yesterday said the long Christmas holiday would start on Dec. 22 (Saturday) and end on Tuesday (Dec. 25).

Dec. 23 (Sunday) is a regular nonworking day while Dec. 24 (Monday) has been declared a special nonworking day under Presidential Proclamation No. 1253, Christmas Day is a regular holiday.

FA LA LA LA A8

Changing of the guard and guards at Philcomsat

By DJ Yap and Dante L. Lucas

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD IN A subsidiary of Philippine Geomatics from Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat) took a dramatic and literal turn yesterday following a canceled bird across the security personnel of the two camps vying for control of the company.

At the end of the day, the office of Philcomsat Holdings Corp. (PHC) on the second floor of the Pacific Star Plaza on Gil Puyat Avenue had two sets of guards—one from the "original" board of directors led by Enrique Locsin, and the other from Dan-Abal Alkor Billiver group.

The standoff started Tuesday night when four security guards under the employ of the Locsin-led board, the group supported by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), barricaded themselves inside the office with instructions not to allow the Abal-Billiver group faces entering and setting up shop.

Lawyers of the Locsin-led board said the office remained under their control pending the resolution of the legal dispute over the legitimacy of the new board of directors.

The long-running corporate dispute pits private shareholders of the Philcomsat group with majority set of Philcomsat owners and directors up-

CHANGING A9

WEATHER FORECAST

Second
FRONTPAGE

EZ2 FOUR DIGIT
8 3 2 7 5 6

SUERTRES
2 6 2 3 8 3

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64 elderly inmates pardoned

But executive clemency does not include Jalosjos, says Palace

By Julie M. Aurelio

SIXTY-FOUR ELDERLY INmates became free men again yesterday after being granted a full pardon by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye broke the good news to around 40 of the pardoned inmates at the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa yesterday.

"It's virtue of the law, all of you are now granted full pardon and are free men again," Bunye said to applause from the pardoned prisoners.

The executive clemency also restored inmates to other penal institutions who had been recommended for pardon.

Convicted rapist Romeo Jalosjos, however, was not in the list of pardoned or paroled prisoners. (See related story.)

Bunye explained that the primary consideration in granting a pardon was an inmate's advanced age. Jalosjos is only 67 years old.

In ordering the release of the elderly prisoners, the President said this was because "prisoners are people" too.

"They deserve as much compassion, if not more humane treatment, as those living in a free society," she said in a statement.

"The President is hopeful that society will welcome them back and give them a second chance to live their lives as useful citizens," said Bunye.

Bunye visited the national penitentiary and shook hands with all the inmates gathered in the MMP's social hall. All of the elderly prisoners had graying hair and were able to walk only with the aid of a cane or a lifeless prisoner.

With the 64 granted pardon yesterday, the number of prisoners granted full, executive clemency by the President this year totaled 208 convicts, said Bunye. The President commuted the sentences of 173 others, he said.

Another 46 were granted a pardon based on various illness, while 73 were recommended by the Board of Pardons and Parole, he said.

Aside from the 64 inmates who were given pardon yesterday, Bunye said 83 other cases are being processed and "may be decided on or before Christmas."

Of the 208 pardoned inmates, Bunye said 127 were granted clemency because they had reached the age of 70.

There were 227 male convicts and 21 female prisoners out of the 208 inmates pardoned this year. Of the 173 cases where sentences were commuted, 165 were male.

Among the pardoned convicts was a Japanese national, Hideichi Matsudaira, 71, who was convicted of rape.

Bunye said four of the pardoned prisoners were 80 years old each.—Evelyn Rapsin, Rebecca Cabrales, Eleonor de Asis and Catherine Candoy, Another convict, Rodolfo Perez, is already 91 years old.

"My also influenced for the President's consideration an additional 12 convicts for the commemoration of their sentences in time for the Christmas season," he added.

Asuncion Arro, 74, sat quietly in his wheelchair as Bunye read out the President's executive clemency order.

"My relatives are waiting for me," he said, his eyes blank and unseeing.

Bienvenido Tagaloa, 71, lamented the fact that none of his eight children had visited him since 2004.

"I do not know where to find them. I will go home to Antipolo, to see if they will accept me again," he told the reporter in Filipino. With a report from Christine Avendaño

WHAT'S INSIDE

NETWORK WAR heats up over ABS-CBN report /A7

3 CABINET members confirmed; 9 bypassed /A4

Truce stays, says Palace

THE UNILATERAL "FREE-FIRE CHRISTmas ceasefire order declared by the government military despite the deadly attack staged by communist rebels in Palawan where three Filipino soldiers were killed, Malacañang said yesterday.

"The suspension of military operations (against the New People's Army) continues from Dec. 18 to Jan. 6 notwithstanding the incident in Palawan," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said.

But Ermita said that police and soldiers have been told to be careful and be on the alert against possible attacks by NPA rebels.

Ermita made the statement a day after President Arroyo sought a revision of the unilateral truce following last weekend's attack on Marine soldiers in Palawan.

The executive secretary said the cessation may, anyway, mean that the government does not engage in "knee-jerk reactions."

—Christina O. Ante-Roldan

Prison execs probed over TV interview

BUREAU OF CORRECTION OFFICIALS will be investigated after convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos was interviewed over ABS-CBN television yesterday only a day after Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez issued an order banning media interviews with inmates without his permission.

The directive to the Bucor was prompted by an earlier press interview in which Jalosjos claimed that he was already a free man following President Macapagal-Arroyo's commutation of his sentences and the Bureau of Prisons' earlier releasing him last Dec. 14. Malacañang clarified that the 67-year-old Jalosjos was not to be released until he was 70.

According to Gonzalez, he had "scolded" Bucor director Ricardo Japitana over the early morning interview with Jalosjos in which the former congressman insisted that he was no longer a prisoner.

He said he Bucor officials who violated his order were under investigation.

Gonzalez also disputed Jalosjos' assertion that he was not a prisoner because the order releasing him had not been revoked.

"That release order has never been rescinded, so there's nothing to rescind. What he has is a private copy of the release order," Gonzalez said.

Jalosjos was convicted in 1997 for statutory rape and sentenced to two life terms. His victim was an 11-year-old girl. Last April the President commuted his sentence to 30 years. —Lailell Ianson-ay

Senate OKs UP charter

THE SENATE YESterday ratified a new charter for the University of the Philippines but not before Sen. Aquilino Pimentel and UP president Emerlinda Roman exchanged heated words that barely disrupted the deliberations Tuesday night.

The Senate majority leader blasted Pangilinan and then with the ratification of the UP Charter Act, UP would be able to honor its tuition. Through the use of its economic endowment.

Pangilinan reported that the charter was ratified after the 10 amendments introduced by Pimentel were agreed upon by the Senate with minor modifications.

Pimentel and Roman and then accessories ranks hard of newspaper and bad manners. Pimentel accused Roman in a speech of being intolerant with those who disagree with them and of being against transparency.

Pangilinan took up the cudgels for the UP officials and took the floor and said: "I respect the views raised by Senator Pimentel. I disagree with the manner of points. But she raised with respect to the attitude of the UP officials."

Now, Atong Ang wants to go to US

RESISTED TWICE BEFORE, RETIRED tycoon Charlie "Atong" Ang has asked the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to allow him to travel to the United States to attend his daughter's wedding.

He asked the antigraft court to grant him a 20-day travel permit to Las Vegas, Nevada beginning Jan. 8 so he could attend the wedding of his daughter, Jeanne-rose, on Jan. 19.

In a motion filed early this week, Ang invoked the Filipino tradition that parents had to be at their children's side on such special occasions.

Ang, a convicted of Senator Panfilo Lacson Estrada in a plunder case, was convicted of a lesser offense of corruption of public officials and was sentenced to six years. He was later placed under probation until 2009.

Ang had filed two requests to travel to Cambodia to work there as a consultant for a gaming firm, but those were denied by the antigraft court, which ruled that consultancy of travel is an essential part of probation.

FONTANA

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Kyla
Eddie Ng

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, December 20, 2007
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 7:10-14
Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a name of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what this greeting could mean.

But the angel said, "Do not fear, Mary, for God has favored blissfully as you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus." He will be great and shall rightly be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; he will rule over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be? I am a virgin!" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth is expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible."

Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Commentary:

Mar 2:1: Time for the consummation of the ages to follow the pattern. First the words of the prophet foretold of Jesus' birth, the King to be—and also did not stand God bestowing such honor. Also, that the child God is living in her womb and there will be a sign—a child will be conceived who will be Emmanuel—God with us—for the people of Israel. And a child was born of a young woman in this story. And the angel comes to Mary, as he did to Zechariah, and she questions how that she is not virtual shrunk. This is the beginning of the new—the consummated and fulfilled, the new creation. The miraculous birth of God into human flesh. And all will call his name Emmanuel throughout the ages. The road up is more about who the child will be—the Emmanuel—rather than about Mary who will bear him into the world. Her role is to be named Jesus Joshua. He will be great, before God and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God is the father and David the king, long dead, is his father too and the kingdom belongs to him forever. And he will rule. He is born of the Father and the Spirit in Mary, and in every one of us. If we obey and accept the Word into our hearts and bodies. Nothing is impossible with God—God is to be born in us as surely as he was born in Mary. This is Christmas—not the past—but now. Are we saying, "Be it done unto me according to God's word?"

CHRISTMAS SMILES
The family of policewoman Lani-Rose Cordel, who is expecting another child, is a picture of anticipation as they await the noon-of-yesterday's Christmas gift-giving by President Macapagal-Arroyo for selected police families. The occasion was the inauguration of the Pulis Kalinga quarters by complete for police personnel in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig City.

3 Cabinet members confirmed; 9 bypassed

By Dona Pazzibugan

NINE CABINET OFFICIALS (AND) have bypassed the confirmation by the congressional Commission on Appointments this year, even as the bicameral body gave the nod to three other Cabinet appointees.

Trade Secretary Peter Favila, Interior Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral were confirmed by the CA plenary yesterday without any objections being posed against them.

Those whose appointments were not acted on were Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes, Labor Secretary Rosalio Pena, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Health Secretary Francisco Duque.

Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane, Environment Secretary Lito Atienza, Agriculture Secretary Islaeli Mendoza and Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman.

Yesterday's plenary session was the CA's last for the year, as the bypassed appointments and other pending matters will be taken up next until next year's the board.

Also confirmed yesterday were the appointments of Eva Bachtiel and Bar Council member, eight ambassadors and consuls and the ombudsman's deputy.

Senate President Manuel Villar blamed Malacañang for the failure of the nine Cabinet secretaries' failure to get the nominations final.

"We're not blaming all of these Cabinet members but the President should realize that the delay in the confirmation of her Cabinet members is caused by the refusal of some to cooperate with Senate and the House of Representatives," said Villar in Filipino, adding that some of them have not submitted the required documents.

SC rebuffs Subic car importers

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE SUPREME COURT HAS JUSTICES the trial of importers of second-hand automobiles to allow the Olongapo Regional Trial Court to continue hearing their petition to nullify a Bureau of Internal Revenue circular levying taxes on cars imported through the Subic Free Port Zone but sold or public auction.

The high court upheld the Court of Appeals ruling that the Olongapo RTC has no jurisdiction over the case filed by the Subic International Auctioneers Inc. and Subic Bay Motors Corp.

The two firms had contested the BIR's Revenue Memorandum Circular that levied taxes on vehicles sold at public auctions within the Subic Special Economic Zone.

They asked the Olongapo RTC to nullify the BIR circular for being unconstitutional.

While the case was pending, the RTC issued a writ of preliminary injunction to stop the implementation of the said circular.

But Mr. commissioner Guillermo Parayno, other BIR Officials and the Office of the Solicitor General then elevated the case to the Court of Appeals, questioning the lower court's jurisdiction.

The appellate court ruled then ruled that the Olongapo RTC had no jurisdiction over the issue, and dismissed the civil case brought by the vehicle importers.

Asia International and Subic Bay Motors then questioned the appellate court's ruling before the Supreme Court.

But according to the high court, the Court of Tax Appeals and not the RTC has jurisdiction over issues concerning the BIR's decisions in cases involving disputed assessments, as well as matters that arise from the National Internal Revenue Code and/or other laws administered by the BIR.

The court also said that Asia International and Subic Bay Motors failed to ask the BIR to reconsider its assessment before taking the issue to the courts. Hence, their petition should be dismissed, it added.

"It is settled that the premature invocation of the court's intervention is fatal to one's cause of action. If a remedy within the administrative machinery can still be resorted to by giving the administrative officer every opportunity to decide on a matter that comes within his jurisdiction, then such remedy must first be exhausted before the court's power of judicial remedy can be sought," it said.

The high court also said the 1601 and the Office of the Solicitor General could not circumvent the RTC's order before the Court of Appeals even without filing a motion for reconsideration on the RTC's issuance, contrary to what the respondents argued.

It said the issue of jurisdiction, or whether the court has power and authority to decide on a case, could be raised any time during the proceedings.

"In fact, courts may take cognizance of the issue even if not raised by the parties themselves. There is thus no reason to preclude the CA from ruling on this issue even if allegedly, the same has not yet been resolved by the trial court," it said.

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Cheap meds bill not enough – NGO

By Beverly T. Mendoza

A NON-GOVERNMENT HEALTH ALliance said yesterday the passage of the cheaper medicines bill by the House of Representatives was a step in the right direction but is still short of providing a long-term solution to the problem of expensive drugs.

Elizabeth Pura Ito Kalinangan (EPIK), an alliance of about 28 health organizations, said "only the nationalization of our drug industry can resolve the problem and ensure low medicine prices in the long term."

Dr. Merry-Ella EPIK spokesperson, said in an interview that while they think the passing of the bill points to a positive direction toward providing cheaper medicines for Filipinos, they doubt if it will keep medicine prices low for the long.

Congress passed on Tuesday House Bill 3644 or the cheaper medicines bill, which retains the intellectual property rights on medicines by allowing parallel importation of patented medicines and creating a mechanism for price controls. The bill will be consolidated with a related bill in the Senate in a bicameral conference before it is approved in final form and sent to the President for signing into law.

Ella said they are pushing for the creation of a national drug industry fund that will support the research activities of local scientists and local drug manufacturers.

"This was not mentioned in HB 3644, and we think this will be one of the strong pillars of a policy toward ensuring low prices of medicines in the long-term," said Ella.

She said dependence on parallel importation will only keep the country dependent on big pharmaceutical firms, and that the country should develop its capacity to produce its own medicines to be able to control its prices.

Multinational pharmaceutical firms, on the other hand, have said Philippine laws should stay close to the country's international commitments on trade and intellectual property rights.

DECEMBER IS NATIONAL ENERGY CONSCIOUSNESS MONTH

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Noli to jobseekers: Shun shortcut

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO has urged departing Filipinos to go through the right process, not the shortcut, when seeking employment abroad to stop illegal recruitment and other forms of abuse against Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

"It may take a long time but going through the process is the surest and safest way when seeking employment abroad," De Castro told migrant workers and leaders of government agencies involved in protecting OFWs during Monday's forum on OFWs sponsored by the Commission on Overseas Filipinos.

De Castro, concerned at advances on OFWs, said that doing the 'right thing' could boost the government's campaign against illegal recruitment.

He admitted that curbing illegal recruitment was difficult because many Filipinos still prefer to take the shortcut in seeking employment overseas.

"Illegal recruitment is the country's prominent and easy process but it also puts the lives of OFWs in danger," De Castro stressed.

De Castro admitted that curbing illegal recruitment was made even more difficult for those who choose convenience over safety.

At the same time, De Castro said the government was addressing the needs and concerns of OFWs who have contributed much to improving the economy.

Because of this, he said, the OFWs' welfare will continue to be on top of the government's priorities.

He cited as proof the recent signing by President Macapagal-Arroyo of Administrative Order 262 which established the intervention committee for the celebration of the Overseas Filipino Month every December and the International Migrants Day every 18th day of December.

De Castro said the order was to recognize the important role of more than eight million migrant workers in nation-building and national development.

"I'm glad that the committee was successful in consolidating the plans of the various government agencies and private organizations to celebrate this occasion which happens to be the first," he said.

After 40 years, Church revives body to look into land reform cases

By Beverly T. Natividad

WITH ITS SUCCESSFUL Hacienda Luisita conversion in the crosshairs of the Hacienda Luisita Inc. Church is now setting its sights on other land reform cases.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has recommended the National Board Congress (NBC) after 40 years to look closely into the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, particularly in the light of the Hacienda case and the expiration of the CARP in June 2008.

"This is the time to discuss closely what can be done," Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Antonio Ledesma, chair of NBC II's executive committee, told the Inquirer.

Ledesma said NBC II was being convened to look into why most poverty-stricken still existing, and what the Church could do about it.

The last NBC was convened in 1967.

Weakness of law

The case of the Hacienda Luisita illustrates the weaknesses of the law governing the CARP, Ledesma said.

He said third while the Church had committed to "keep an eye" on the Hacienda case, it also wanted to study other land reform cases in other provinces.

"It is part of the concern of NBC to look into all these issues of poverty and social injustice. There are many similar cases, but they are not reported," he said.

Ledesma said that while the CARP as a key issue of NBC II, the Church hoped to get the full views of its implementation as announced through subsequent consultations.

He said NBC II would undertake the consultations starting in January.

For CARP extension

Like it has done in the Hacienda case, the Church will take the "see, judge, act" approach in the other land reform cases that it will look into, Ledesma said.

He said the Church would also push for the extension of the CARP law, with accompanying improvements, for another 10 years.

Hacienda Auxiliary Bishop Jesus Antonio Dinoso appealed to Jose Miguel Roces Inc. (JMRI), not to appeal President Macapagal-Arroyo's order to revoke the disputed Sumilao property back under CARP coverage.

"We are appealing to the conscience of Jose Roces. Don't be blinded ... We are appealing to their social responsibility," Pabillo said in an interview over Catholic-run Radio Veritas.

It ain't over yet, farmers warned

From page A1

tenor, Mr. Arroyo and Cojuangco would be "a major roadblock to the Sumilao farmers' demand for land."

He said "the farmers will surely face still opposition from JMRI," whose affiliate, San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), is now the owner of the land.

Indeed, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita had already signed at a prior conference in Manila ordering that the order be signed on Tuesday by authority of Mr. Arroyo did not grant the farmers ownership of the land.

'Spirit' of order

But he said the "spirit" of the order was there.

"That is the objective," he said, pointing out that Mr. Arroyo had ordered the farmers to reclaim the land transferred as unwanted domains by the Bi. government to the Bukidnon but which the farmers developed as an agro-industrial park by SMFI.

Ermita did not give any timeline for the redistribution of the land to the farmers who marched 1,700 kilometers for two months from Mindanao to Mala Manila to press their claim.

'Concessions to Dueñas'

He appealed to the farmers to understand that the predicament of the Palace, admits, he said, was constrained to follow legal processes, including the "repeal and revocation clauses" for both the farmers and SMFI, which bought the property in 2002 from the Quintanilla family.

"I hope people could be reasonable enough to explain the meaning of the President's decision," Ermita said, adding that SMFI had 15 days to appeal Mr. Arroyo's order, and the Office of the President several weeks to act on it.

Ermita said the "political accommodation and economic concessions" granted Cojuangco by Mr. Arroyo were preventing her and the Department of Agrarian Reform "from exercising political will to give the land back to the farmers."

He said those concessions "can be seen not only in the Sumilao farmers' case but also in oil in environmental disputes, particularly over the mobile-line gate-terminal ferry land."

"This also explains why Dueñas's BMC is now pushing for the expansion of its nursery plantation and offshore project in Bukidnon, which the Sumilao 500 hectares of land to Negros, Isabela and Cagayan, which the Isabela-Cagayan farmers oppose," he said.

Ortanez, member of House Bill No. 3899, is the proposed Genuine Agrarian Reform Act of 2007, which farmers-cum-sons are seeking to highlight: "the Gospel according to the government's [CARP]."

Gov't as referee

"The Sumilao farmers' plight is a concrete case where landlords made use of the CARP to their own ends. land distribution, land-use conversions in one of the main arguments provided by CARP to landowners' legal arsenal to maximize ownership and control of lands," he said.

He cited DAR records showing that from 1979 to Dec. 31, 2003, there were 2,895 approved applications for land-use conversions involving 46,405.0124 hectares of agricultural land, and National Statistics Office records showing that in 2000, 827,691 hectares of agricultural land were converted to other uses.

Ermita said that in issuing a "political decision," the government was "bending over backward" in favor of the farmers.

"But I don't think we can understand the enemy for [even] bending [over backward]," he said, stressing that the government's role was only as a "referee."

"Let's wait for the respective [SMFI] to receive the order and then we will make a move. Let's not push that situation too hard ... Let's allow the process to be followed," Ermita said.

SMFI's corporate officer, affiliate counsel and the company was still awaiting a copy of the order. It refrained in previous statement that it would issue a response only after it had received the document from Malacañang.

Ermita said he had asked Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales to advise the farmers to be patient because "a fact finding mission has to be sent [to Bukidnon] to determine the [conditions on the ground]."

Farm Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman said he had asked the farmers to wait for the finality of Mr. Arroyo's order.

"It is part of the process of BRC to look into all these issues of poverty and social injustice. There are many similar cases, but they are not reported," he said.

Ledesma said that with the CARP as a key issue of NBC II, the Church hoped to get the full views of its implementation announcements through subsequent consultations.

He said NBC II would undertake the consultations starting in January.

For CARP extension

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Sumilao not celebrating

By Ma. Cecilia Rodriguez
Inquirer Mindanao

IN BARANGAY LAN-NGEBTE in Sumilao, there is no celebration over the issuance of President Macapagal-Arroyo's land-use conversion order.

Rafael Dasa, board member of the Magsaysaysan Pangkalinan in mga Lumad ning sa Dating Bukidnon Inc. and the San Vicente Landless Farmers' Association, said Malacañang's decision was not enough to make them rejoice.

In an unwieldy field yesterday, the Sumilao farmers met together the non-coms Jun-Jun and by Mr Arroyo.

"That is short of what we have been asking for," said Magdael Ironware Cinquen

From page A1

again, that time to Davo, Manila, to meet with Cardinal Rosales.

They intend to update their principal supporter on their plans and seek his advice.

Cease and desist

The farmers want the DAR to stop SMFI from commencing a hog farm on the property because the company failed to follow the proper environmental clearance process in the Inner Landowners Northern Quitandinta, in 1990.

They say that under DAR rules, the Quintanillas were obliged to undertake the conversion of the land into an agricultural land before they sold it. The Quintanillas sold the property in 2002 to SMFI, which began to build a hog farm there, the farmers say, in spite with Cardinal Rosales.

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Under DAR rules, the failure to complete the conversion would mean the land will again be subjected to CARP coverage and distributed to the farmers.

Pangandaman said that once the order of CARP coverage was issued, the DAR would "promptly" act on the case.

He declined to say exactly how long the farmers had to wait to get their certificates of land ownership award. But he said DAR rules on land acquisition and distribution should be completed within 240 days.

See photo from Elizabeth Sanchez-Lanzon in Manila

Gardener tags 2 Santiago aides in murder, then recants

By Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—Two of the three suspects in the killing of designers' son Ernest Santiago were released at noon yesterday after they were arrested earlier at his wake in Makati City and charged with robbery-hamidan.

Assistant Provincial Prosecutor Alex Tiong ordered the release of Alex Miranda and Arjo Lacson upon the expiration of the 36-hour period for warrantless arrest. However, the other suspect, Zosimo Segura, remained under police custody.

Tiong gave the suspects 10 days to file their counter-affidavits.

Pagsanjan Mayor George "E.R." Ejercito Estrada said Miranda and Lacson voluntarily declined the recantation against them.

Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr., Laguna police director, said the cases filed against Miranda and Lacson would undergo preliminary investigation. "If the prosecutor decides to release [the cases], then we will immediately accept them," Rojas said.

Dogs did not bark

Rojas told the Inquirer the release of the three suspects proved their statement that the intruders were known to Santiago.

Ejercito said Miranda was Santiago's foreman and Bicol patient for 20 years while Lacson was the victim's personal assistant for the past eight years. Regini was Santiago's gardener and caretaker of his house in Pagsanjan for 17 years.

"That would explain why the three dogs owned by the victim did not bark when they broke into the house of Santiago," he said.

Santiago, 71, was found dead inside his house in Barangay Bubukal II in Pagsanjan at around 8 a.m. on Sunday. Police said he died from two gunshot wounds in the right side of his head.

Ragasa confesses

Police said investigators took out the three suspects for questioning on Tuesday after they received information that Santiago's driving lifeguard friends was found along the national road in Barangay 39 in Infanta, Quezon, a day before.

Ejercito personally led the police team that retrieved the vehicle. He said there while in Infanta, he visited to reassure Regina "to admit any knowledge he had regarding the killing."

"I assured him that we will help him be under the Witness Protection Program of the government. Then suddenly, he broke down and admitted his participation in the crime. He said it was not his intention to kill his boss," Ejercito said.

Ejercito said Regina told him that he initially ordered the house before Jason Sanchez by destroying the glass window near the front door.

In his sworn statement, Regina said he then opened the door and let Lacson in. He said Miranda was already inside the house at the night before.

He (Regina) said he was looking for (Santiago's) money when Tito Ernest suddenly awoke. He then thought of getting a handbill and hitting for him twice in the head," Ejercito said, speaking in English and Filipino.

After killing the victim, the two cellular phones, jewelry and other valuables, the three allegedly boarded Santiago's vehicle and sped toward Quezon.

'Brainwashed'

Ejercito said Regina told him that both Lacson and Miranda "brainwashed" him into stealing Santiago's P500,000 cash which the victim withdrew from the bank, two days before he was killed.

The two suspects allegedly admitted to Regina that they were angry with Santiago for his failure to pay them their salaries for at least a year, the mayor said.

Ejercito said the three planned the crime at the victim's newly opened OSH Restaurant in Lucban, Quezon, a month ago.

Regina said Miranda gave him P40,000 while his two others received had P80,000 each.

But before he was formally charged, Regina recanted.

"Well, he no pinalay si kun. Parang no pinilit ng ang pulis [I was told he did not force himself up]," Regina said in an interview with ABS-CBN.

THE THREE MAIN Ejercito cops as a suspect in the Santiago murder during the wake on Tuesday night. The three men were subsequently released as the mayor failed to produce sufficient warrant.

Santiago wake: Drama at Forbes Park unfolding

From page A1

This followed reports that Santiago's gardener, Zosimo Regino, had been arrested earlier that day, had confessed to the murder and implicated one of the couple's three longtime associates.

Closed-door meeting

Anticipating the police's arrest, some of Santiago's friends and colleagues, who are among the couple's customers and clients, stayed very late into the night at a private room in the chapel, forming a closed door meeting. They were the ones who have been making preparations for Santiago's wake and funeral arrangements. They refused entry to media.

In the group were advertising PR executive Roberto Cubillos, Santiago's close friend for the '70s, socialites Ruby Duyungan and Malou Domingo, retail executive Ramon Jose Aguirre, Ed Sy and Santiago's younger sister Nene Santiago-Herrera, his only daughter in the country.

They arrived along with Santiago's assistant, Ann Miranda and Aida Lores, in the presence of lawyers Freddie Villamor and Abel Alcalde. Acting on behalf of Santiago's family, Caballero sought the consent of Villamor and Alcalde for Miranda and Lores, who, the group claimed, were only in Baguio to be tagged as suspects.

Longtime associate

Miranda had been Santiago's friend for more than 20 years and had been working for Santiago in many of his landscaping projects. Lores had been working for Santiago for the past six years, most recently in the fifth anniversary project in Quezon.

"They had no access for legal counsel, and since we wanted to get to the bottom of it, we had a long talk with them," Cubillos later told the Inquirer.

Tension in the courtyard

At the fountain's courtyard, at midnight approached, the tension and suspicion was palpable, as Santiago's friends just milled about, many of them expressing disbelief and unclear that Santiago could have suffered a tragic fate in the hands of friends he had entrusted and employed.

Among those were Lores' sister, Ana Escudero, Larry Lorenzo, aide Escudero (who left after 8:30), Amy Espino, Rita Reyes, Tess Mateo, Sue Ocampo, Rudy Layug, Rusty Lopez, friend Lysander—seated a cross section of volunteers and lawyers.

"We were waiting really for the Organizer's mayor to see what he had, like wanting a sense of relief to know could have action and that peace," said Cruz.

The presence of police cars outside fountain canal of the police and TV crews in the courtyard didn't ease the tension.

Finally long past midnight, Pagsanjan Mayor Ejercito Estrada dealt with the police and Santiago's gardener. According to Cubillos, Ejercito told him that he didn't relate what he told to do but that he had to do it because Santiago was also his good friend.

Caballero naively asked that Lores be allowed to enter the chapel where Eason remains lay.

Gardener recants

Curiously, the gardener was left to be interviewed by the media. But to be over, gifted by Ejercito's friends by the media watchers of conversations that the gardener Regino said that he had executed his orders except statement said that he didn't kill Santiago.

In a dramatic scene, the gardener was brought before fourth-age's coffin, the lid of which had been unlocked close by Caballero. "He had it wasn't right for the police to put your friend's body then become an autopsy had already been done, and the autopsy reports are available to them," Caballero later said.

In the discussion that followed with the mayor, it was discovered that the autopsy party had not been informed of Miranda and Lores. Moreover, Caballero's group learned that Regino didn't have legal counsel around when he made his confession to the police.

After some discussion, the mayor and Santiago's friends agreed that Miranda and Lores would go with Ejercito for routine questioning. So at past 2 a.m., in the glare of TV cameras, the two and the gardener were escorted out of the chapel and into the police vehicles to be driven back to Laguna for further questioning.

Legal process

"We just wanted the legal process to be followed, so that the guilty would be prosecuted and the innocent be left unharmed," Caballero later explained their move on that unexpected night.

Yesterday, Miranda and Lores were released, in the absence of charges against them. According to Caballero, the gardener is still being held without legal counsel. Caballero also said that lawyer King Rodrigo, the son of the late Sen. Joe Rodrigo, has been approached to represent the gardener.

In the meantime, Ernest Santiago, the flamboyant artist whose daughter had brightened up the country's lifestyle scene, has yet to rest in peace.

Network war heats up over ABS-CBN report

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

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Clarion
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Free Installation!
Merry Christmas Offer!
Most Complete Line of High Pressure Washer & Vacuum Cleaner at the Best Prices!
P2,700
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GE Appliances
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GMA's ₱30-B 'pork' hit; deadlock looms on nat'l budget

From page A1

The ₱30 billion in pork barrel includes the intelligence and contingency funds, ₱5 billion Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) for Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and ₱3 billion for Autonomous Region in the Cordillera (ARC).

The Senate agreed to adopt the two (adjustments) proposals in its version only after they had relinquished their demand to restore the ₱30 billion.

Each senator and congressman is allocated a pork barrel, known as Priority Development Assistance Fund, which comes from the increased budget for finance that's put property. The pork barrel has been a notorious source of kickbacks for lawmakers.

Cut: debt service

With government planners adjusting the peso-dollar rate to 2008 because of the strong Philippine currency, Lacson said they should prompt Malacañang to cut debt service payments by ₱1.3 billion and reallocate the money to social services.

With no extra debt service allocations, Lacson said the President would have access to more funds that she could distribute to swing-state voters.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, who has shepherded the 2008 budget in behalf of the Arroyo administration in the Senate, has insisted on keeping the proposed ₱205.7 billion allocations for infrastructure projects in the Senate version.

The House of Representatives has slashed the debt service allocation by ₱17.6 billion in its budget version and reassigned part of the cut to other areas, such as the ₱4.7 billion increase in the Department of Health's budget.

Sen. Loren Legarda proposed that Congress save by ₱50 billion from the ₱1.3 billion for the entire list social services by reallocating some of the funds from the reduction in interest payments.

Legarda said the Senate should also slash the lump sum allocations for Malacañang that are passed to overspending.

She said the ₱1.3 billion from the ₱1.3 billion for the Office of the President's budget go to buy helicopters could be reimbursed to education, health, agriculture and environment.

At expense of the poor

She lashed out at the government for its misplaced obsession with achieving a balanced budget next year largely through the cutback side of government assets and underspending in social services at the expense of the poor.

"It is disturbing if the process to balance the budget will be at the expense of reducing vital subsidy-consuming the Budget of key services. Public investments in health, education, agriculture and environment would have the greatest impact on addressing the problem of social inequities and deprivation. Increased funding for budget for social expenditures for the sake of a balanced budget, we should increase it significantly," she said.

Poor ER, BOC performance

Legarda said that there was no way the government could achieve a zero-deficit next year based on the performance of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs.

"Actual revenue collection is way behind programmed collections. The burgeoning deficit is only held in check by continuous privatization scheme and underspending for government services," she said.

Asked by newsmen from the side of a big-ticket power user, the national government granted last month its biggest ever budget surplus of ₱94.1 billion.

Shortfalls in tax revenue collection have built up the past three quarters to a combined ₱93.82 billion, according to Legarda.

She said Finance Secretary Margarito Teves was able to "manage" the shortfall by cutting the Bureau of the Treasury's quarterly releases to government more soon, and reducing expenditures by ₱38.48 billion in the last three quarters.

Legarda noted that even the International Monetary Fund had been critical of Teves' asset management of the IRA and the BOC.

HOLIDAY SPIRIT: President Arroyo hands over a gift to firework program PO1 Lexi Rose Cantiri (right) who's holding her 1-year-old child Gito even grocers adorned PNP Garilla under the Chinatown Rice Progress during the inauguration of the Pelo-Kalinga NCRPO complex for police personnel in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig. AFP PHOTO

236 lawmakers receive P200,000 bonus each

From page A1

some payment of rental, travel, transportation and other costs, they said. The funds are part of the official House budget.

The funds are released to both administration and opposition members of the House in full transparency and reported to the Commission on Audit, Ramos said Bonnaddo said.

Speaker Jose de Venecia said the funds were for the "hard-working" members of the lawmakers' respective staff "in whatever way they can use it."

"Technically speaking ... they are casuals," De Venecia said in a telephone interview.

Malacañang recently announced that national government employees were to receive ₱10,000 in bonuses by the Christmas holidays.

Properly receipted

"These are distributed through checks, signed for and properly receipted," De Venecia said.

Asked if the funds may be used for the lawmakers' gift giving in their respective constituencies, De Venecia said they were for basic living.

"Gift-giving is a congressman's own business," De Venecia said.

When Congress went on recess in October, the House leadership also released ₱200,000 for the lawmakers' district offices.

De Venecia then made the same explanation that the funds were properly documented as opposed to the funds in cash distributed to lawmakers in Malacañang.

In October, around 90 solons, mostly lawmakers received cash gifts worth between ₱200,000 and ₱500,000 during a meeting in Malacañang.

The amounts were given a few hours before President Macapagal-Arroyo received a crushing impeachment defeat in the House of Representatives. The host complained, which was filed by lawyer Roel Pulido and provided a list of other cases, was eventually dismissed.

Pampanga Gov Ed still waiting for disbursement voucher

From page A1

(LPP), where's the disbursement voucher?

Pulido on Tuesday said the LPP leadership had not yet replied to his request for a copy of the document as proof that the amount was LPP money.

He made the request in a Dec. 2 letter to the LPP to reply to it within 20 letters of receipt by the group or file suit in court.

The seek giving rational reasons, even as opposition leaders raised suspicions of bribery, having come after the filing of another impeachment complaint against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

During the Senate's Nov. 14 inquiry into the incident, Pulido did not tell the P500,000 cash before money but expressed the view that it was illegally disbursed since no one had come forward to show proof of its source.

Disclaiming claiming

"I said I am willing to issue an affidavit stating that please give us the disbursement papers to prove that the money really came from LPP in the context of over two opposing reports disclaiming and claiming that the funds came from LPP," the governor said.

On the basis of denials from certain political quarters, the LPP on Dec. 12 admitted that the money came from its "capability-building program" for members, who got the same amount, handed the leg to Pacilio's chief of staff.

Bank of Cornerstone

The paper bundles on the bills showed markings that the money was withdrawn from Bank of Commerce in Angeles City in Pampanga.

In the meeting, the officials agreed to receive help for building projects when Pacilio needs it because in Mendoza that he would not accept money if it was used for the barangay elections scheduled for Oct. 29.

Mendoza said the P500,000 cash was deposited in a bank account in the name of the local government. He criticized on Monday that he would not return the money because he would use it for barangay projects.

Keeping cash as evidence

Pacilio said he expected the Senate blue ribbon committee to propose a measure on illegally handed out cash and what to do with the said local officials who in case they find themselves in such situations.

The committee allowed Pacilio to keep the money at the provincial capitol's vault to await proper disposition or as evidence in complaints.

Lawyers Filibert Lantion and a lawyer/ association have filed separate graft cases against Pacilio and other elected officials who confirmed getting cash in Malacañang on Oct. 11.

With a report from Carmenita Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon

HANDLED

Talk rife Malacañang mulling over extension of Esperon term

From page A1

Esperon said he was not aware of any talk or plan to extend Esperon's term.

The talk persists that President Macapagal-Arroyo will extend Esperon's term as a reward for quashing the failed revolt of Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim earlier 29.

Also, Esperon has cast himself in the forefront of the war against the communist rebels.

Two more years

Last week, Esperon said he expected the Abu Sayyaf Group would emerge as the most serious threat to two years because their rebels' ranks were rapidly dwindling.

Esperon announced the number of rebels would be cut to 3,000 from 7,000 by 2008 next year

Changing of the guard ...

From page B1

jointed by the PCGG, the agency tasked with recovering the ill-gotten wealth of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his cronies. (See "Third First Digest" on this page.)

Monopoly

The Philcomsat group (Philcomsat, Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. [POTC] and their PHC subsidiary whose cash board was dubbed Iran the group's monopoly of free satellite itself during the Marcos regime) were acquisitioned in the 1980s from business allies of Marcos.

The government and private shareholders subsequently entered into a compromise agreement, although control for the group continued to swing back and forth between directors appointed by the PCGG and Bildner's group.

It stake to control of the three telecommunications companies and about PCIB in liquid assets held by the group.

Enrile daughter in chair

The new PHC board, which elected the daughter of Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, Katrina Ponce Enrile as director and chair, set out to take control of the office yesterday but their lawyers could not enter as the glass doors were locked and blocked by a heavy shelf.

Inside, some of the guards who had stranded themselves inside the office, said they were acting under the instructions of their chief of security, Arturo Castellon, who told them to stay put starting 9 p.m. Tuesday. He said they were unarmed.

At 2 p.m. yesterday, lawyers for the new board, Ed Kapunan and Dennis Montecillo, said they would "exercise their rightful ownership of the property" and force the guards out.

"This is our property. We can do what we want with it," Kapunan said. Montecillo showed a copy of a condominium certificate of title stating that the owner of the unit occupied by the building was not PHC but Philcomsat itself.

A group of six Makati policemen was called in but they did not participate in resolving the standoff. Elsewhere in the building, tenants and patrons were in and out of the offices, oblivious of the tension on the second floor.

Locksmith

Just before 3 p.m., a locksmith opened the door, and the four guards left the office on their own. Income, the security guards of the Castellon security took charge inside the office, and, again, locked the doors.

Outside, a noisy exchange that turned into a shouting match occurred between Kapunan and Hay Reig, counsel for the Lucio group, who questioned the group's forcible entry.

"Show us the writ. Then we'll abide," Reig told Kapunan.

Kapunan cited the appointment by the PCGG of the new board, saying it was the "legitimate" board that was recognized by the government.

Saguisag son

Reig was joined by Rebo Saguisag, son of former Sen. Rene Saguisag, who said he be the lead counsel for the Lucio group. Reig said the question of who was the legitimate Philcomsat board had yet to be resolved.

He said the Lucio group had a pending motion for a temporary restraining order filed with the Sandiganbayan over the Philcomsat's stockholders' meeting on Nov. 19 that elected the new board.

Until that is resolved, the Lucio group will not allow the "new" board to set up office, Reig said.

"We'll not leave. We'll stay here to make sure nothing is brought in and nothing is brought out. The files inside are ours, and we won't allow them to take anything," he said.

Shifts

Rebo said the security detail provided by Sosa Security Agency for the Lucio group would continue manning the office despite the presence of the new board's own guards. They will go on shifts as usual though there are no activities in the office, he said.

"The (Lucio-led) board can move anywhere. There's always facilities or (Chowking," Rebo said, joking.

Complete reversal

As of yesterday afternoon, eight of the Lucio group's security guards were in possession inside the office.

Inside and behind chained doors were about four of the new board's security guards, in a complete reversal of the situation just hours before.

"We are now in control of [PHC]," said Alfredo I. Ildefonso, president and CEO of the rival board of Philcomsat. "We've taken back something that is ours all along."

Ildefonso said the old and current directors had found that the company was losing "[plundered]" to "staggering" amounts.

"We found checks in huge amounts payable to the personal accounts of the directors and their girlfriends," she told the Inquirer shortly after entering the premises of PHC.

He accused the rival group led by Lucio and Concepcion Ildefonso of using companies "to buy TROs (temporary restraining orders)" in an attempt to thwart the moves of private shareholders at every step.

"We've discovered unbelievable looting here," Ildefonso said. "The checks are going out by the millions."

No looting

Ildefonso denies any looting. "There is no looting going on. Everything is accounted for. That's why we're doing an audit to make things transparent to show our accountability to our stockholders," she said.

Ildefonso said the current Philcomsat group—Philcomsat, POTC and their PHC subsidiary—now needs approximately P6 billion to P8 billion to pay off its debts in 2010.

She believes that the present value has now come down to P2 billion.

In the case of trade debt, the PHC, the primary one that Philip Bender, a director allied with the rival group, had testified before the Senate that the company held P300 million in cash and marketable securities.

Since there is only "P100 million to P200 million" left in the company's bank accounts, "they have to [put plunderer] as much as P600 million," she said.

More than 50 cases

Ildefonso said that if the Ildefonso group "didn't file more than 50 cases against us," group, we would not have to spend so much on legal fees. Of course, we have to defend ourselves."

Ildefonso said the only way to resolve the accusations being hurled by one group against the other was to have an independent audit of all the three companies.

"But what has happened the Bildner group, which has physical control of Philcomsat and POTC, has not been audited since 2000," she said.

Ildefonso sounded the illegal entry issue day of the guards hired by the Ildefonso group into the PHC office.

Makati cops hands off

Reig said the Lucio group was preparing charges of illegal detention and trespassing against Ildefonso's group.

"They gained access to the office with an expired condominium certificate title and a board resolution that was self-serving," he said in an interview. "Now they brought armed security personnel and threat our guards out."

Reig expressed disappointment at the decision of the Makati police to stay out of the dispute.

"The police are [have adopted a] hands off [policy]. We're very frustrated," he said. "This is plain brute force they're using and we don't want to escalate down to their level."

No legal basis

Reig said the Ildefonso group's move had no legal basis, especially since the normal procedure for taking possession of physical assets or premises was to request for assistance from a court sheriff to serve a lawful writ.

"In this case, they brought their own armed security personnel, about 30 of them," he said.

Ildefonso, however, was undaunted, and challenged her rivals to file charges in court against her and her group.

"We are ready to face them," she said.

VERBAL CALISTHENICS. Lawyer Lorna Kapunan (back to camera) representing the rival Philcomsat board figures in a shouting match with Atty Reig of the Enrique Locsin board inside the Philcomsat office at the Pacific Star Bldg. in Makati City. LEO ESTOPACE

ANOTHER MAKATI STANDOFF. Makati police try to pry open the locked door of the Philcomsat office where four security guards of the Locsin board locked themselves in to prevent the new PCGG nominees on the board from entering the premises. LEO ESTOPACE

WHAT WENT BEFORE

Philcomsat pioneer in satellite communications

PHILCOMSAT HOLDINGS CORP. (PHC), a subsidiary of Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat), was placed under the control of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) in 1986 after shares of its parent firm, Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. (POTC), were sequestered by the government on allegations that these had been acquired illegally.

Years after, a compromise agreement between the government and businessman Roberto Ongpin, the original owner of 3,000 POTC shares, was made, leaving the government with 35 percent of the shares.

They later granted the government its two nominees on the PHC board of directors.

In 2006, Enrique Locsin and other PCGG nominees were elected to the PHC board. The rival faction headed by Victor Africa and Edmundo Rosario filed a petition with the Makati Regional Trial Court to invalidate the election, saying the PHC investor and election committee had wrongly recognized Locsin's proxy nomination instead of Africa's proxy nomination.

Interlocking directorship

The court battle was over a longstanding issue among rival shareholders for control of the PHC, Philcomsat and POTC, which have interlocking directorships.

Philcomsat pioneered international satellite communications in the Philippines by being the country's exclusive representative to the International Communications Satellite Organization (Intelsat). Philcomsat's clients included telecommunications giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

Revenue from the satellite business has driven up the value of the corporation posed by fiber optics in transmitting voice, data and images.

Locsin board nullified

On Oct. 14, 2006, the Makati RTC nullified the election of the Locsin board and reinstated as valid the Africa board. On April 12, 2007, the court issued a formal resolution of the 2006 ruling.

On April 26 this year, the 40-ka-Bildner group went to the second floor of the Pacific Star building in Makati City to evict the PCGG board physically, but found the office closed.

The PCGG board questioned the ruling before the Court of Appeals, arguing that the trial court had no jurisdiction over ill-gotten wealth cases. On April 26, the appeals court issued a temporary restraining order against the enforcement of the ruling.

The Africa-Rosario group filed an appeal. The same group has accused PCGG nominees of dissipating the assets of PHC. A Senate inquiry into the allegations was also in a recommendation to prosecute Locsin and other PCGG nominees. *Cyril L. Bautista, Inquirer Research*

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MANDARIN ORIENTAL MANILA

Fa la la la: Long Christmas ...

From page B1

Employees are expected at their government and private offices on Dec. 28 (Wednesday) until Dec. 28 (Friday).

The four-day New Year holiday is from Dec. 29 (Saturday) until noon Jan. 1 (Tuesday).

Dec. 31 special holiday

Under Proclamation No. 1213, Dec. 31 (Monday) is a regular holiday marking the inauguration of national hero Jose Rizal, Jan. 31—the last day of the year—Jana Jones declared a special holiday.

It's back in work for the entire government bureaucracy and the private sector on Jan. 2 (Wednesday).

Ermita said President Macapagal-Arroyo would be spending Christmas with her family in Mindanao. But she would celebrate New Year's Eve in Baguio City.

To boost tourism, Ms Arroyo made "holiday economics"—the practice of moving observance of holidays in order to give workers long weekends—an official government policy when she signed into law Republic Act No. 9492 in July.

RA 9492, "An Act Rationalizing the Celebration of Holidays," mandates that most holidays, except for those with religious significance, will be observed across the country on a Monday.

Thus, if June 12 falls on a weekend, Independence Day will be celebrated on the next Monday. The same principle applies if June 12 falls on any day except Monday.

Movable holidays

The other "movable" legal holidays are Human Day (April 9), Labor Day (May 1), Memorial Day (Aug. 27), National Heroes Day (Aug. 31) and Bonifacio Day (Nov. 30).

Holidays that are to be observed on the day itself are Christmas Day (Dec. 25), New Year's Eve (Dec. 31), New Year's Day (Jan. 1), Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Eid'l Fitr and Eid'l Adha (Nov. 1).

Under the labor code, employers must pay 200 percent of the daily rate of their employees who report for work on legal holidays—Jan. 1, April 9, May 1, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, June 12, National Heroes Day, the end of Ramadan, Nov. 30, Christmas Day and Dec. 30.

On special holidays, employees must pay an additional 30 percent over the regular rate.

Considered special holidays are Aug. 21 (Ninoy Aquino Day), Nov. 1, Election Day, Dec. 31, and Black Saturday. The President may declare other special holidays from time to time. *Richard Gim Chua*

"Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me; And to him that ordereth his way aright will I show the salvation of God."

Psalms 50:23

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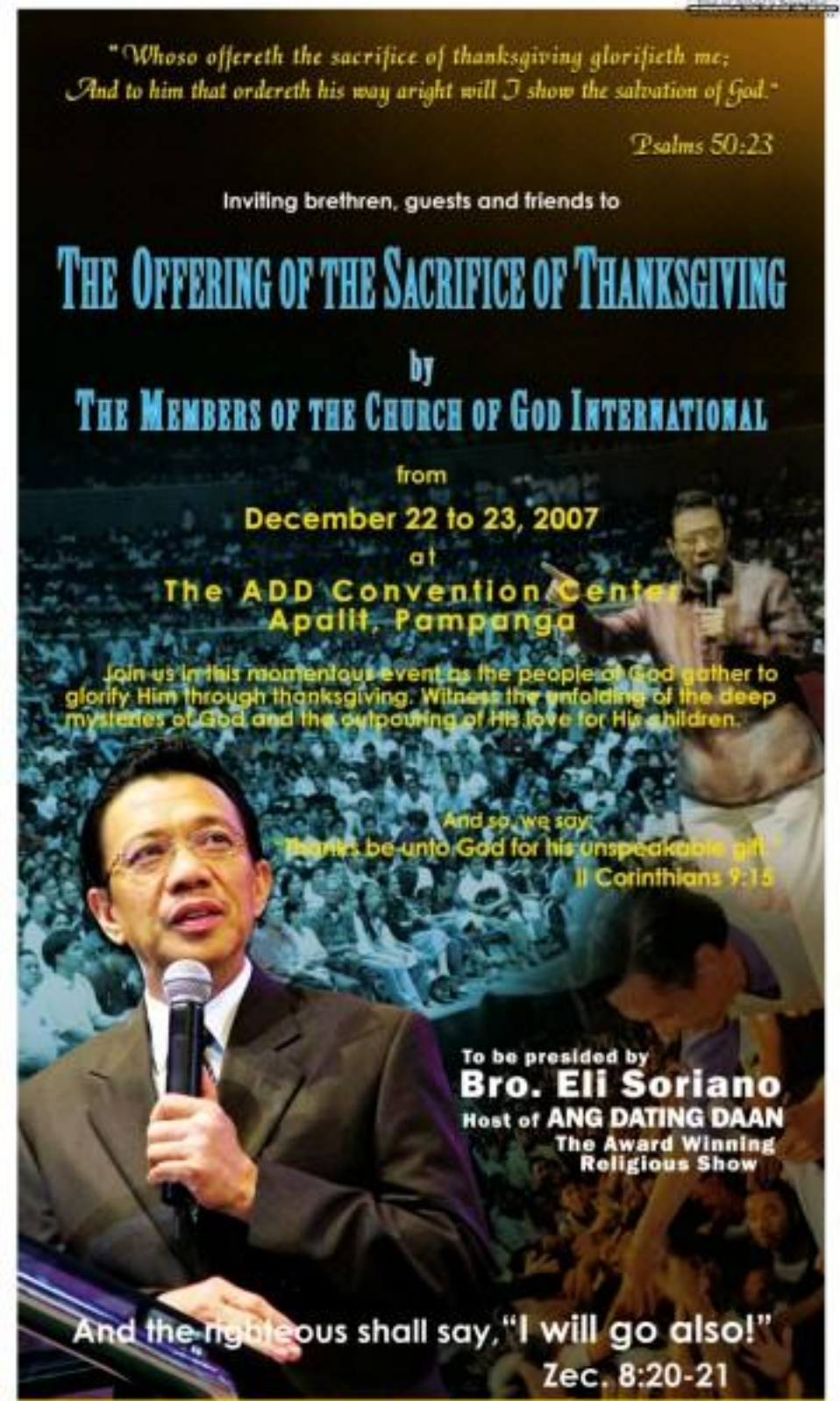

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Jonas ma files petition for writ of amparo

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE MOTHER OF MISSING ACTIVIST Jonas Burgos yesterday sought a writ of amparo to force police and military agencies, as well as the Commission on Human Rights, to help her search for her son.

In a petition filed with the Court of Appeals, Edita Burgos alleged that the military, the police and the CHR knew what happened to her son but are holding what they know about the incident.

The writ of amparo, which compels law enforcement agencies to confirm a missing person, was recently made available by the Supreme Court in order to help resolve hundreds of cases of extrajudicial killings and disappearances.

Jonas, the son of the late press freedom fighter Joe Burgos, was abducted by armed men at the Fort Gomez mall in Quezon City on April 28, 2007. The heroin plate on the vehicle used to kidnap Jonas was traced to the 56th Infantry Battalion composed in Barangay Bulacsi.

Top officials summoned

Burgos asked the appellate court to direct the police to summon top military officials led by chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. and Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano explain their actions in connection with the abduction of Jonas, and to open their camps for inspection.

She also asked that the Commission on Human Rights chair Purificación Quisumbing be ordered to provide her with copies of the statements, as well as the testimonies, of military officials it had questioned in connection with her son's alleged abduction.

Aside from Esperon, Yano and Quisumbing, Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr. was also named a respondent in the case.

Covering up the truth

"They know who abducted Jonas, who ordered his abduction, why he was abducted and what they have done to him, whether he [is] still alive, where he is or where his body is buried. However, the three investigating agencies now appear to have conspired to cover up the truth," she said.

Burgos said she had received information that a certain 1Lt. Jaime Mendoza Jr., an Intelligence Officer of the 56th Infantry Battalion, had recommended to the Commission General of the 703rd Infantry Brigade that Jonas be delisted from the Order of Battle for the second quarter of the year because he had already been "neutralized."

She also cited a special report from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, issued by Esperon, which tagged Jonas as a member of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-Tha. established the motive for her son's abduction, she claimed.

Burgos alleged that there was good reason to believe that 56th IB commanding officer 1Lt Col. Melquiades Feliciano ordered Jonas' abduction or allowed his abduction to use the license plate NAB-394 in the incident.

Suspended investigation

The military had denied the accusation and said the license plate had been lost or stolen from the Army camp.

As for the CHR, Burgos said it suspended its investigation into Jonas' disappearance on the "false" ground that she was uncooperative. She also said the commission "abdicated" its duty when it asked the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to continue the search for Jonas.

2 missing UP students not with us, Army insists

By Alcuin Papa

THE TWO MISSING UNIVERSITY OF THE Philippines students are not in the custody of the military, Army chief Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano insisted yesterday.

In a talk with reporters at the Camp Aguinaldo Golf Course yesterday, Yano said he acted on an earlier request submitted by Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta "Etta" Rosales to locate Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeno.

"With (the) not with us). To be very specific, no less than (Sec. Eliza Bonaño Esquivel) me and I readily acted on that and there have been no positive results," Yano said.

He explained that as a result of Rosales' request, his office made some inquiries with some units under his command. But the inquiries yielded nothing, the Army chief said.

Yano was reacting to claims made by a witness in a testimony before the Court of Appeals Tuesday that he saw Cadapan chained to a bed inside the headquarters of the 24th Infantry Battalion based in Bulacan in September 2006.

New claims

The court is hearing a petition of habeas corpus filed by the parents of Cadapan, 30, and Empeno, 30. The two have been missing since June 2006. They were abducted allegedly by soldiers in Hagonoy, Bulacan together with former Mariel Hernandez.

Witness Raymund Manalo also said in the hearing that he saw Empeno and Merino in the same Bulacan camp.

Manalo and his brother, Reynaldo, said they were abducted by the para-military group the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) in San Ildefonso, Bulacan in February 2006. The military claimed the two are members of the New People's Army (NPA). While under detention, the two escaped last August and are now under the protection of the courts' writ of amparo.

When asked if he would investigate the new claims on Cadapan, Yano insisted that the Army had already done its part.

"There have been some requests outside the judicial process and I have been very supportive. Without any hesitation I have looked into the matter and I have not received any such report [of Cadapan's custody with the military]."

Yano said the matter is now with the courts anyway. "We'd rather go through the process because that has already been taken cognizance by the court and I may be preempting the findings of the court. I'd rather wait for the judicial process to take its due course."

No shortcuts

He also said it was his policy to "to respect human rights and to operate within the bounds of law. There should be no shortcuts because in the long run, it will not be to the benefit of the armed forces and the government."

Yano said he was also willing to screen the any member of the Army if they are suspected to be involved in criminal activities including the disappearances of militants.

Militant groups have said the Philippine Army was responsible for the several cases of abductions and human rights abuses. This includes the abduction of Jonas Burgos, son of press freedom icon Joe "Joe" Burgos Jr., last April 28.

Police investigators traced the license plate on a vehicle used to the Jonas' abduction to the headquarters of the 56th Infantry Battalion based in Norzagaray, Bulacan.

The military has also denied it had Burgos in their custody.

Yesterday, Edita Burgos sought a writ of amparo to compel the military and police to look for her son.

"Anything that would help us find the truth then it is for the good not only for (the Philippine Army but the entire Filipino nation. ... I am very supportive of any effort to that extend," Yano said.

INQUIRER

OPINION

Breakthrough

EDITORIAL

THE FARMERS FROM SUMULAO WHO MARCHED 1,700 kilometers "from Mindanao to Malacañang" reached a crucial milestone last Monday. They met (twice) with President Macapagal-Arroyo, and in candid discussions persuaded her to act to their favor. The following day, the President issued an executive order, revoking the reclassification of the disputed land. The entire 144-hectare property is agricultural land, the order declared.

Both the farmers and Malacañang officials called the President's decision an important first step—or a critical new start. The Palace was decidedly sanguine. "I believe this revocation order is a significant first step and gives teeth to the intention of the President to really help the farmers," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye told reporters after personally handing the farmers a copy of the new order. The farmers' chief counsel was a little more melancholy. "It will be the start of another long battle to restore the land to the farmers," lawyer Marlen Manuel said.

The farmers themselves recognized the President's order as "a big milestone in our request to reclaim our land" and said they were grateful. At the same time, mindful of the long road (literally and legally) that they had traveled, they continued to press their case. In a statement they issued, they said: "While we rejoice at this victory, we are aware that this revocation is but a partial redress of the grave injustice that was committed against us that led to the dispossession of our land 30 years ago. This redress is already long overdue."

Apparently, for Senators Gregorio Honasan and Benigno Aquino III, not overdue enough. Aquino, in particular, disappointed the constituency his martyred father gave life to—the middle forces that form the basis of our Edsa-inspired democracy—with his comments about the interests of business. It was the Cojuangco, the hacienda scion, in him talking.

Has Ms Arroyo's (belated) embrace of the Sumulao issue really put the interests of landowners and big business at greater risk? What arrant nonsense. Those who think the threshold the Sumulao farmers crossed is dangerously low (dangerous, that is, for landowners) should consider what the farmers went through: an initial victory, followed by years of consuming frustration, and leading to the difficult decision to march to Malacañang.

Indeed, the farmers lost the legal case because the Ramos administration and the Davide Supreme Court gave credence to a landlord's fantasy (Norberto Quisumbing Jr.'s ambitious development plan for the Sumulao property). We still not quarrel with that decision, but wish to point out only its consequences: Quisumbing failed to turn fantasy into reality during the given period. When those five years lapsed, the landowners failed to meet the Court's own essential condition.

Five years, Supreme Court decisions—these and other facts raise the standard for executive action, not lower it, as Aquino and Honasan seem to fear. Indeed, years of frustration have forced the Sumilao farmers into what could be a politically untenable position: Despite the President's order, they refuse to go back to Bukidnon until they are "finally installed" in their land. But the order has to work its way through the legal and bureaucratic processes, the same system that caused the farmers' anguish desperation in the first place. As an official of the Department of Agrarian Reform has said, it may take as much as a year to finally install the farmers.

Of course, some of this means that the President has no other options but to wait for the courts to validate her reversion order. She can, for instance, court her influences on San Miguel Corp., the parent company of the firm which bought Quisumbing's interest in Sumilao. Its CEO, Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., is a pivotal political ally. (Also, Cojuangco's main political lieutenant, Gilbert Teodoro Jr., serves as defense secretary.) She can also order Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman to expedite the process. And so on.

The President's order thus puts the farmers in yet another dilemma. They can insist on a solution that is not politically feasible, or trust the system that brought them so much grief. So much for unduly favoring the landless.

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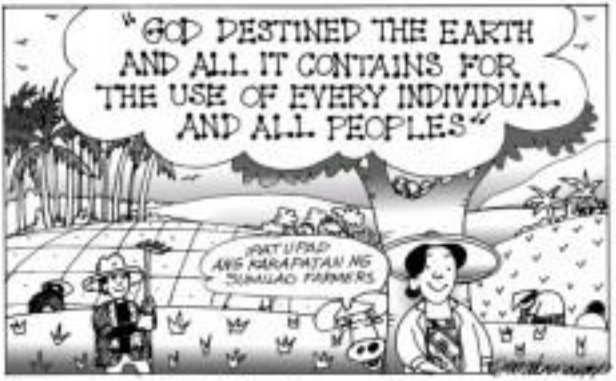


Wedding rings as visas

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

IN THE BRAHMAN PLAN "FOLLIES ON THE WOOD," three impoverished sisters, in a turn of the century Swiss mountain village, are saved with twists. "Blockbuster . . . fold for a circle-fled makeover a perfect match."

Some would feel at home in Philippine flicks. Others would cringe. "Marriage broker" is a haunting term, says a Commission on Filipino Overseas study. Wedding rings are visas out of grinding poverty (home: 868,781 Filipinos married foreigners, within an 18-year span: four out of 10 (351) powered marriages).

The number could "further expand (that) decade," according to Rhida Saleeon and Myra Ramos of CFO, both demographers. Study Opinta, in their paper on marriage migration.

Overseas Filipinos' favorite destinations: Commission records a wide variation.

Some spouses-to-be admit that marrying foreigners "is the easiest ticket for possible overseas work and settlement overseas," the Commission's secretary Opinion wrote. Many wings of commission also provides income for families locked into poverty.

Last year, 20,895 marriages to foreigners were registered—up from 17,746 the previous year. Destinations for the brides, and occasional grooms, in order, were: Japan—8,868; Australia—3,780; Japan—8,695; Canada—998; United Kingdom—678. These accounted women out marriages of convenience.

An Asian marriage migration trend is surging, Saleeon, Ramos and Opinion point out. They cite the number of Filipinas flying to Taiwan, Japan and South Korea as "significant." CFO data from 1999 to 2006 show more Filipinas marrying outside of these three countries (Table 1).

Brides tend to be younger and less educated than their foreign spouses. "There is a rising number of Filipina women marrying Asian nationals nearly their elder age." Opinion surmises. Among "Filipina . . . there is a search for love," they conclude. "Such a search for love," they conclude. "Such a search for love/ two hundred/ two young/ 98 light, let's go," the let's a good catch. You? You."

That's light-hearted boundary. But it shows two different worlds collide when young Filipinas, often from remote hamlets, pair up with elderly foreigners, says Philippine Studies. In 1995, the Asiaweek University quarterly analyzed psychological failure from 20,364 Filipino-American marriages over five years.

"The Filipina wife was not prepared for the role as she left the Japanese household, often shocked, even expected for her in laws," writes Grossman of the Philippines' Leslie Bonnici. There's a flipside. "The Japanese were surprised by the independent spirit of the foreigner wife."

Both Angelica Escribano, Bonnici studied marriages in a farming village on northeast Southern Island. In the 1980s, foreign brides started streaming into Barangay. Most were Koreans and Chinese, followed by Filipinas from Manila, Bataan, Cavite, Bicol, Leyte.

As in other countries, the money flood into town. This leaves villages like Barangay with a "consumption culture." Many brides always "do not" find a spouse. More seek out local Visayas for matchmaking.

In Barangay, most marriages were brokered through third participant who explained "doing, don't" study shows. Filipinas are more literate spouses through mobile phones, internet based shaming leads to wedding rings. Often, there's an overseas relative eager to ask for them.

Bonnici cited of Filipinas brides leave good as an example. CFO director Rolando Opinion, who today most of those heading for Japan and Korea are high school graduates and college undergraduates. Overall, educational levels of the young Filipinas, Taiwanese, Koreans and Japanese spouses are "similar."

The Taiwanese spouse often was less educated than the Filipina. Two "married up." This was true for half of the 4,902 registered Filipina marriages from 1989 to 2004. But in Japan and Korea, the spouses sometimes "marry down."

Marriages of convenience present important problems, which they believe "could dramatically change—but from," Saleeon, Ramos and Opinion observed. They reveal "desperate moves of women who would rather ride on, trying to get a foreign spouse with their income bracket." That's an alternative to coping with "a female life in poverty and/or solitude or heartache." It also leaves a sordid enigma of being labeled as "mail-order brides."

Those three sings on water (Sans: Vita's handsome, he's rich). That to-be-side to side. We hated he has a simple/ 1970 best you every night (But only winners he's asleep/ So, you're all right."

Not all Asian eyes be high. Taipei data showed that 1,000 of the 10,343 Filipinas were re-directed their Japanese spouses. In the "immigrant study, some Filipina wives were Catholics but didn't have access as church. Two to a birth and their fathers awakened. In 2006, in-laws and sisters "harrassed" him more," they joined clinds of their Japanese families.

Aside from language barriers, different cultures, food, "characteristics peculiar to the Japanese," Japanese psychiatrist Norimiko Kawamura noted. Thus, groups like the Good Shepherd sisters run seminars that include tips on "women's rights and responsibilities" in marriage.

Filipina Nita and Japanese Emiko are sign language at communication. Nicko has visited the Philippines. Nita will go to Japan as her wedding ring becomes a visa. "I can learn to love Emiko," Nita says wistfully.

Other Filipinas, like Angel in marriages of convenience to an rich husband an Indonesian, it condemns rulers whose greed compels. Filipinas as easy slave, with their deepest human Aspire. To each seven measure of a decent life, their love gift a visa in their wedding rings. Like Bank of Scripture, these Filipinas could send to alien guns.

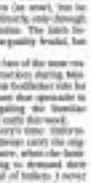
* * *

E-mail: jlaoilmercado@gmail.com

Feudal

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



IT HASN'T IN THE NEWS, BUT THERE'S a scene in the opening of Mario Puzo's "The Godfather" that's worth recalling. Vito Corleone begs for assistance to get on a supplicious rules but seem to find work his problems. It's all to the does of season because it's the last thing the Godfather lacked, but his gamut of borrowing money from a reluctant Capo Jack Bonifacio being it's a debt to give to a needful importance. It's his loss to the needful importance. He falls or his knees, kisses the Godfather's hand, and departs. More than any subsistence help, it's that gesture that has made this fellow grateful—and loyal—for life.

In another film, we can't recall that now "Sicilian" which was rampant in the country because it remained feudal in many respects in the mountainside, land was concentrated in the hands of a few landlords who ruled their domains with an iron fist. It always happens the way the unnamed lords of feudal districts such several centuries ago, holding the power of life and death over them. The peasant with the lord-serf relationship was not engaged in any kind of economic exchange that made it much out their economic body and soul. They were their source of life and death and could never either him with impunity.

This relationship was governed not by impersonal laws of supply and demand, nor by contract but by supplication, not by justice but by charity. That was the seed from which sprang this society's feudal outlook, whose particularity is the "politics of patronage" or the "politics of favors." This is the politics by which politicians placed the part of feudal lords to the citizens' servants. They were the source of beneficence and could dispense or withhold it depending on whether they were pleased or displeased. Indeed, that was the seed from which sprang much of the Filipinos' attitudes and values. Its precursors to ignore rules and return as previous' appeal, his promotion to rely on connections rather than ability his personnel to seek favors rather than due.

The old feudal lord of the manor or cacique, of course, was the occupant of Malacañang, and it was not uncommon in the past to see

lords scrap them to replace the outmoded houses to send some scrap of blessing their way. Well, there was a more intimate kind of the matter or cacique there (or now), was the position he imparted directly, only through the intermediation of the office. The latch he operated by the 8 bars is arguably feudal, but that's another story.

I thought of this when the face of the most vicious display of feudal practice during Macoy' time Odarco shifted his feudalistic role for all it was worth), until I saw that spectacle in Malacañang of Glen regaling the Sumilao farmers with the President really that word.

I never saw it during Cory's time. Unfortunately for her, Cory will always carry the stigma of the Mendiola massacre, when she knew we wronged to Malacañang to demand their land. Ramos was a bit of a feudal lord, but now is during Edsa Ramos' time. At least in scale, if less violently in substance, Ramos struck the most capitalistic pose among the presidents, talking of open and dynamic and seemed to be the most democratic of the lot after Macoy. Arroyo could be who were well on their way to being so. And Erap, though the most interested in feudal values, dumped them, "making decisions" brings the forwards of his rule. Ironically enough, might have been the one who most did something for land reform, passing Houses to Member in charge of the DAR.

Of course, it was the Sumilao farmers themselves who sought the audience with GMA. Can we imagine them in the days of Macoy and Erap, the dispersed will do dispersed things, including, as the local saying puts it, cling to a knife. The law, in the form of the DAR, the Supreme Court, and the entire government itself, was united against them. Even the Church, which was the original sinner to climb by DAR of the land they are laying claim to, was on their side. Where law was cold, impassive and unyielding here, their President, notwithstanding proof to the contrary, compelled to take it to a higher law, the human one if you're dying.

DAR did revoke the conversion of the disputed land to industrial land and deemed the original DAR grant of the land to the farmers in the name of land reform be obeyed. What else, unless certain in the pitch of the farmers' (but it just the first step in a journey of a thousand miles), we do not know. But for the sooner government is basking in the glory of a (PR) job well done, something that has to do with the GMA flying to Hawaii to pluck an OPM from the point of death (somehow that didn't fly off). But for any economic law Tuesday, I thought I saw how Corleone personally intervening more, to restore land to the poor or to supplicious.

I'm happy for the farmers and their day's Pyrrhic victory, but I'm not holding my breath. But in the end you can't overestimate the momentous gain that process, which is a stinging and poignant confession only on our virtues. The whole point of land reform, the reason we realize government dispossess your land, is to end once and for all the vestiges of feudalism in the country, not the simplistic breaking up huge chunks of land and giving land to the tillers but by optimally tweaking the forces that bind the serf to his lord, the servant to his master, the weak and powerless to the strong and all-powerful. We, if the Sumilao farmers have gotten more than, or part of it, it has only been because of the sweet simple of charity over justice, gratuity over due, forbearance over obligation. It is only because of the kind of old feudal, sign de lord's right, but decided to—And now we have ours.

Feudalism is dead, long live feudalism!

Choosing peace

COMMENTARY

Carlos C. Conde
John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues

A HERALD HARBIR RECALLER RECENTLY TOLD me should be happy that agribusiness companies are making the lands of Sumilao productive again. In August, he added, they were barren. Soon it will be covered with golf courses to till those lands and make them productive.

This man is a free agent. This man has a job. In 1986, when I first went to Mindanao with my boss, the economist Jaime Sobrino Aquino. The sociologist Jesuit Antonio Ledesma, who is now archbishop of Cagayan de Oro, had asked him to investigate complaints of farmers in Bantilan and Impasug-ong, about their conflicts with army officers who claim their lands.

We were all over but very early Bantilan has also Impasug-ong, Manolo Fortich and Cagayan de Oro City, talking to all sides. We listened to small farmers, agribusiness executives, even generals. Ledesma, who passed away in 2000, told us: "Be faithful to the Holy Scriptures. But, also tell them the presidential agrarian reform officer of Bukidnon, about how she and her team tried to guard against an inform but faceless agency under construction with complaints of the tribes to Bishop Antonio Fortunato Ranalan, now archbishop of Manila, and to the Religious of St. Augustine who lived among the people of Impasug-ong. We dug up accounts of another Jesuit anthropologist, Vicente G. Galdon, that were, at the time, considered as insightful studies of indigenous peoples's interaction with big agribusiness.

Fast forward to seven years later. It is one evening in late 1989. A bunch of NGOs had strong words for

Interesting 'perceptions' by gov't

LETTERS

WHEN I READ IN THE PAPERS that President Macapagal-Arroyo herself and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Sen. Arthur Defensor and other GMA defenders threatened to have "perceptions" the recent Pulse Asia survey indicating that Filipinos consider GMA and her administration the most corrupt ever, I had to run to the dictionary to look up again the meaning of the word "perception."

Perhaps, all these years, I had been using "perceive" and "perception" in an erroneous context. If so, my elementary and high school teachers must have been either too lenient with me or had a good laugh behind my back. But I remember having used either word or not more or another to convey to them nothing in the sense I understood them to mean. At the time of my life, I considered those two words quite crudes and thought they would overrule impressionistic teachers.

Now, I am disturbed. for over 60 years, I had been an ignoramus for going by what GMA and her cohorts say learned as they all are, what are "perceived" is, by implication, not really true. Me, I had thought all the while that "perception" is the knowledge obtained through the senses. And I had trusted my senses all along.

Besides, with no dominant knowledge about the new sciences in the meaning of "perceive" and "perception," as propounded by GMA and company, I am now reasoned that all that my senses have been telling me about what is happening in this country are not really true. For a long time now, I have been lamenting the "perceived" corruption, evasion of responsibility, non-transparency, etc. of the people in the dregs of administration. Now, I am reasoned that these "perceptions" are mere illusions. The following therefore are mere "perceptions" (read illusions) in the new meaning of the word.

1. GMA persisted in front of the statue of Rizal that she would not run for reelection in 2004.

2. 1000 won the electoral fair and square in 2004 (according to herself).

3. Nobody helped Jocjoc Bolante to escape abroad to avoid prosecution.

4. Erap is innocent (according to himself).

5. The GTF, Bro.Eddie, Estrada, de Macapagal-Arroyo(2), Fuinco, Jalosjos and other exposed government anomalies are all above board.

6. The Undersecretary is doing her best in going all-out in her effort to exculpate the government according to herself.

7. Human rights violations, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances are being investigated.

8. The economy has improved tremendously and people have more money to buy commodities of continually increasing prices and it is possible that in time, one would need a barrel(s) of pesos to buy a kilo of rice—just like during the Japanese occupation when the country was struck with "Mickey Mouse money."

I could go on endlessly with a lot of saintly "perceptions" but I "perceive" I am getting confused and abused.

—JESUS LARUEL,
ususa_larue@yahoo.com

Where gov't failed in Pen takeover

RE MANUEL L. QUEZON III'S column "War Freaks," (Inquirer, 12/13/07) I don't think one of our Cadre as a people is our tendency to think a man after the fashion.

The looting took place after the government had proclaimed victory? There was looting right after that but it didn't make them rats, none before Antonio Tuñanes IV surrendered. The Peninsula Hotel takeover was dismissed as a bank? Miguel Zubiri not having a mandate of 11 million votes? Hon. who indeed are the war freaks who heroically dismantled Manila's armed to end it all in an ocean of blood?

Mumbo, the government a eighth to be blamed—it should have capitulated to Tuñanes rather as it should not have evacuated to Tuñanes' bailiwick.

The government who taking for island, maybe, and "brilliant" decided it with a very good opportunity as spill it. And the government failed to seize the moment.

—EDUARDO FELICES
diag@tonet@yahoo.com

Consuelo Alger's maternal lineage

IN MY RECENT COMMENTARY "A WOMAN named Consuelo" (Inquirer, 12/12/07), I wrote that Consuelo Alger was a Zobel on her paternal line and an Ayala on her mother's side. This is incorrect.

Consuelo was the daughter of Enrique Zobel de Ayala and Soledad Montaño, his second wife. He had remarried after his first wife, Consuelo Roxas de Ayala, died after seven years of their marriage.

Doña Mercedes Zobel de Melchor was Consuelo's half-sister, being the daughter of Enrique Zobel de Ayala by his first marriage.

Many thanks to Victor Gochuico of Ayala Foundation, with whom I checked this matter and who in turn checked with Marivel Soriano, director of the Filipinas Heritage Library.

—BELINDA A. AGUILAR,
professor and director
of Philippine Studies,
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Victims' kin recall MV Doña Paz sinking

TODAY, DEC. 20, WE COMMEMORATE THE 20th death anniversary of my loved ones and those who perished in the world's worst sea tragedy of all time, the sinking of MV Doña Paz.

Twenty long years of missed memories with the death of my parents and sister. As my family recalls to mind their untimely demise, most of the Filipino people are busy preparing for Christmas.

This is not only a time to remember but also a time to give homage to God Almighty for all the blessings the kin chosen to spare us.

Again, a blessed Christmas to everyone!

—ROLITO TAPIA—SR. WARD,
Block 7, Lot 11, Celina Heights Subdivision,
Bayanan, Bacoor, Cavite

Zubiri denies facilitating Quisumbing-SMFI deal

LAST DEC. 6, 2007, I CAME UPON SOLITA Monsod's column on the said panel implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and the plight of the Bataan farmers who walked from Balanga to Mendiola in order to amplify their claim to a 144-hectare property in Hermosa, Bataan. Monsod talked about how the land was unjustly converted by its previous owner, Norberto Quisumbing, into an agro-industrial estate, and the fact that the land is now owned by San Miguel Foods Inc.

Monsod mentioned me in her column.

During the time that the land was converted by the previous owner, I was not yet the governor of Bataan province. It was then Governor Carlos Bataan who supported Quisumbing on the conversion. In fact, if Monsod would care to interview the original claimants, she would be told that I even supported them financially when they traveled to Quezon City and conducted a hunger strike. My support for the farmers and the unprotected was never in question.

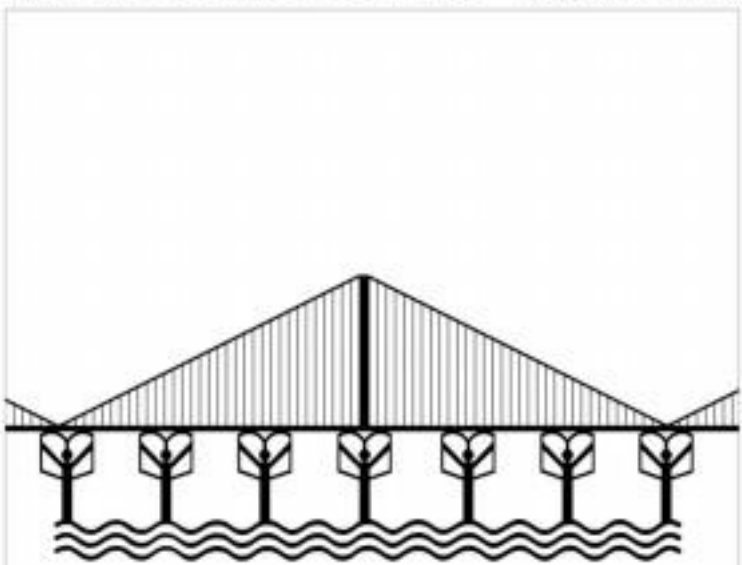
If Sen. panel invited me to read its column (the allegation: "There's the kicker: Q does not do anything toward conversion (at least as far as DAR inspection shows). What he does is sell the land to SMFI (San Miguel Foods Inc.) in 2002 (within the five-year period) allegedly for a very profit) points, the kicker(s) of illegally facilitated by Bataan Gov Jose Enrique Zubiri is the grave cobbling analogy."

The associates, brokers and middleman statements of Monsod which blamed me to a grave robber was very insulting to my person. Monsod should have checked her facts first before making that defamatory claim.

I came to know of the intention of SMFI to purchase land in Bataan because its officials paid me, as the provincial governor, a courtesy visit and told me that they were planning to buy a property in the province, in which they would transfer their feed mill, cannery plant and hog farm from Bulacan. I was told by the owner of Hamilton that the Quisumbing property in that town was for sale. I immediately referred the information to SMFI.

For the record, I did not even personally know Quisumbing during that time. Quisumbing and SMFI dealt with each other and consummated the transaction directly without my participation. I had no information during that time that the farmers were clamoring for the cancellation of the conversion order. They are clearly with the farmers themselves on this matter. I have always believed that the call not hesitate to correct misimpressions created in her columns.

—ROBERTA B. CUBIAO JR.



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Nielsen Media Index Wave 1 2007 Figures. Among broadsheet readers yesterday.

Across the NATION

Panel formed to probe Asean summit scams in Cebu

By Jaime R. Bolanboi
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE VISAYAS Ombudsman has created a panel of investigators to look into the alleged ghost projects that got funding from the budget for the renovation of Southwest Airline Terminal (Mactan) reserved for the Asean summit preparations.

Deputy Ombudsman Pelagio Apostol said the panel's task is to find out if there was an irregularity committed in the implementation of the road rehabilitation projects, which were earmarked for the Asean summit preparations.

Apostol said the outgrowth office is coordinating with the Commission on Audit (COA) in conducting the Dart-finding inquiry over alleged anomalous transactions involving Asean-related projects.

Assistant deputy Ombudsman Virginia Palanca-Jiantego will head the panel, he said.

"We will look into it but we need verification if this transaction requires an irregular because it will be prompting our inquiry. We will consider the findings of the COA on whether there is a need to elevate our inquiry into criminal charges," Ombudsman said.

The COA found almost P200 million of the P2 billion budget given to the Department of Public Works and Highways for Asean-related projects executed by DPWH for road projects in seven cities did not have the consent, including one in the island province of Negros.

NBI widens search for mayor who took son in custody war

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF Investigation has launched a nationwide search for Pulupandan Mayor Magdalena Peña and his 3-year-old son who disappeared after the mayor was ordered by the Supreme Court to return the child to his mother, actress and TV host Marie Roxanne "Pinky" Reeves.

NBI Director Reynaldo Esmeralda Center said the local officers and the NBI in the National Capital Region have been ordered to locate Peña and the child.

The NBI has been ordered to take the child from the mayor after the Supreme Court, ruling on a five-year custody battle between erstwhile lovers Peña and Reeves over the child, issued a decision dated Dec. 3 that gave the child's temporary custody to his mother.

Center said NBI agents searched Peña's house in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental on Tuesday but they could not find him.

The NBI was informed that Peña stopped reporting at the Pulupandan municipal hall since Dec. 14 but filed for an official leave last Monday, Dec. 17.

Peña was, however, reached through his cellular phone by the Inquirer yesterday but he refused to disclose his location, except to say that he and his son were "out of the country."

"My son and I are out of the country, we'll be back after our vacation and we'll go to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court to can restore anyway and we'll be back to work in January," he said.

However, Peña would not say when he would bring the boy back and if it will be before Christmas.

"I am doing this to fight for the rights of men to be with their children. He (public) can down the attention of he mask. to and the Supreme Court to the situation where just because the parents have a design reasons, the children are deprived of their father and the fathers are deprived of their children. This is contrary to natural law and the Constitution," he said.

Reeves lawyer, Katelyn Ursua, in an interview over ABC Bandila, said Peña as a lawyer should follow the SC order or he may be cited for contempt.

WHERE'S THE BEACH? The rapid rise of structures, buildings, condominiums and hotels near the shores of Boracay is prohibiting people of land to the resort island.

Loser in barangay elections shot dead

NAGA CITY—A LOSING CANdidate for barangay chair in the special barangay elections held in a remote village in a Cadiz town was killed, one was wounded and another escaped when they were ambushed by a group of armed men in Barangay Bulan, Tapas, Cadiz on Tuesday morning.

Tapas police Chief Insp. Deandres Candelo A. identified the dead as Teodito Fabalin, who lost when he ran in the special barangay elections for Barangay Brgy. Hacienda, Tapas and Helen Arlan, 38, wife of a former barangay councilor of the same barangay, was wounded while her husband Nilo who was not hit. Candelo said. Felipe V. Calleja, Inquirer Visayas

Troops, MILF clash after rebs retreat from talks

ZAMBOANGA CITY—CLASHES between government soldiers and Moro gunmen broke out days after the supposedly Moro Islamic Liberation Front pulled back from peace talks with the government as scheduled to meet.

Mrs. Eugenia Baraya, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command, said two soldiers were killed while five others were wounded when Marines clashed with members of the Abu Sayyaf, a terrorist group suspected of having ties with the MILF.

The gunmen were led by Nasrullin Mushlahaya and Furyal Indama, according to Baraya.

Baraya said the 3 p.m. encounter in Barangay Bolo Sirak in Diliman Pulan was on Tuesday lasted for three hours.

Brig. Gen. Jacinto Subhan, commander of Task Force Thunder based in Basilan, said two Abu Sayyaf men were killed in the encounter.

MILF is target

But Samar Alih, MILF representative in the team monitoring a ceasefire agreement, said the dead were not Abu Sayyaf members, but MILF guerrillas.

Alih said the military bombarded an MILF camp in Tipo-Tipo town, not in Diliman Pulan.

"The bombs fired by the Marines landed on the Bangsamoro Revolutionary Army building," he said.

Tipo-Tipo Councilor Munir Ali Mundo supported Alih's claim. He said government troops positioned themselves in barangay Alberto and Diliman Pulan, surrounding the camp of MILF Commander Kumalia Sapanton in Sitio Mahda in the village of Bagalubas in Tipo-Tipo.

Alih also said the firing lasted until 6 a.m. on Wednesday, not 6 p.m. on Tuesday as claimed by the military.

Evacuation

In Pikit, North Cotabato, at least 300 families were displaced as government soldiers and suspected MILF rebels clashed on Tuesday.

Also on that day, President Macapagal-Arroyo said the resumed the peace process to continue, but Eid Kabalu, civilian relations chief of the MILF, said "it will be difficult to move on if they continue to insist to work within the framework of the Constitution."

The MILF on Dec. 15 called off the talks after government negotiators inserted into a draft agreement on ancestral domain the phrase "constitutional process" as the guide for the agreement's enforcement.

The government wants the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity, the proposed MILF homeland, subjected to a plebiscite.

MILF chief Ebrahim Murad said the insistence of the government on constitutional processes would prolong the Bangsamoro's agony and the situation could blow up into a full-scale war.

Prayer

"May Allah help us free ourselves from the colonial oppression and injustice and regain our freedom in order that we will be able to reform the community of nations that upholds justice and peace," Mikail said.

He earlier blamed officials in government as those responsible for the rising in the hills in Kuala Lumpur. Some officials, he said, were out to sabotage the peace process.

Marines backed by air strikes killed at least six Moro gunmen suspected of involvement in an attack on a US supply helicopter.

Separately, an Egyptian suspected of being a Jemah regional operative was arrested early on Wednesday in a raid on an Islamic women's residence in Cotabato City.

Acting on a tipoff from residents, a team of police and Army personnel cordoned off the house in Barangay Rosary Heights 7 and an MILF member, Zaki Ibrahim Alfaida, and Joyfrey Alcalen, Inquirer Mindanao staff reporter Jhon Rodriguez

PLAY AREA
Children in pita white workers fix a giant star in the provincial capital of Cavite.

Man who claimed he's Marcos son is in jail

BAGUIO CITY—THE "DEAD" man, who allegedly duped prospective US migrants into paying him over P2 million in 2008, has turned up alive in a jail here.

Stephen Chua's victims asked the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group this week to probe the case if pursued against him.

Chua had offered to facilitate the migration of 20 people to the United States after claiming to be a son of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Beverly Soriano, one of victims, said Chua had been in jail since 2006 under a different name because of another fraud case.

Soriano said she confronted Chua and got a sample of his signature.

"But he kept insisting that he was not Chua," she said, although the man she claimed to be Chua agreed to sign a promissory note that he would return Soriano's P900,000 that was paid to Amazing World Consultancy and General Services.

Chua was supposedly the president of the consultancy firm that operated in the city until 2005.

Court officials asked the Inquirer to keep confidential the identity of the man Soriano claimed to be Chua to avoid disrupting the hearing of the case.

Police have also reserved comment until they can verify Soriano's allegations.

In an affidavit, two victims who said Amazing World transaction with a supposed American contact at the US Embassy, who promised to fast-track the processing of their visas.

All of the victims were asked to meet Chua or the man's representatives in Metro Manila on what would have been their scheduled flight to the United States, Soriano said.

But they were not warned by company employees who claimed Chua's fraudulent activities had purportedly ceased following Chua's death.

Chua supposedly died from a lingering kidney and liver disease at a hospital in Los Angeles, California.

The letter asked the clients to return to Metro Manila on their own to file their could retrieve their fees and retrieve their passports.

It claimed that Chua's will had declared the transfer of a quarter of his estate to the firm and a franchisee.

"Do not try to communicate with us.... We are in mourning," a portion of the letter said. — Tonyzon Cabuenas, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Isafp man captured by rebels freed soon

DAGUM CITY—An agent of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp), who was abducted by communist guerrillas in Compostela Valley over three months ago, would soon be released and returned to his family, a local official acting as negotiator said.

Monkayo Vice Mayor Audrae Cobog said the new development also belied reports that Sgt. Frederick Gallo had already been executed by the rebels.

He said the communist leadership in the province was only waiting for a letter of appeal from Gallo's family before deciding on Gallo's release.

"The family of Sgt. Frederick Gallo sits appeal to the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) central committee for his release," Cobog said.

He said an emissary from the local communist front returned from abroad the letter of appeal bearing samples.

Gallo and five other civilians were taken by about 100 rebels Friday last week. — Frinston Lim, Inquirer Mindanao

RECYCLED PATTERNS Capiznon Christmas decorations in Baguio City.

Senators asked to play Santa for road projects

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET— THE provincial board has endorsed to the Senate 116 resolutions asking for P22.5 million in financial assistance for the construction of farm-to-market roads and livelihood projects.

The Benguet Farmers Federation Inc. (BFFI) said the province's bid to become the "vegetable bowl" of the North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle (NLAQ), one of the government's super regions, remained derailed by rugged roads in the narrow terrain that made delivery of harvests to markets difficult.

"It's an Christmas wish," said Jose Andres Jr., BFFI president.

Board Member Rogelio Lasa, acting vice governor, said the Senate could also be generous like President Macapagal-Arroyo when she ordered the revision of a 144-hectare property in Sariling, Pulilan, to be made part of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

The board resolutions asked eight senators to close their "pork barrel," officially called Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), for farm-to-market roads in Benguet-Ifugao-Bokod (Sen. Ana Miguel Zubiri, P1 million); Bakun, Sablan (Sen. Jose Potot Ejercito, P1 million); Atok, Bokod (Sen. Manuel Lapid, P500,000); Mankayan, Buguias (Sen. Benigno Aquino III, P500,000); Itogon, Kabayan (Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, P1 million); Tublay, Ifugao (Tublay, P1 million); and Sadang, Kapangan (Zubiri, P5 million).

Sen. Pia Cayetano was asked to provide P2 million for the rehabilitation of a Tinoc's zoo-in-order for 13 towns, and Sen. Jamby Madrigal, P2 million for a senior citizens' livelihood program.

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Board Member Johnny Ungchair of the board's committee on agriculture, said the projects would put the farmers closer to the market.

"The three-to-four truck would link them to the well-paved Asin-na highway, the province's main road to Baguio City and the vegetable trading post here," he said. Inquirer Carl Ag. Inquirer Northern Luzon

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Edna Jun Bondoveri
Bureau Chief Florante G. Solmerano

Sisters' stamp collections win Asean tilt

'Every time we read about any stamp collector with a mailing address, we will write the collector through snail mail to exchange stamps'

By Dolfie T. Mallari Jr.
Bureau, Quezon

THREE FILIPINO STUDENTS, two of them sisters from Gumaca town in Quezon, reaped honors for the country in the first Youth Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Stamp Exhibition held recently in Singapore.

Jolly Marquez, 13, a fourth year student at the Gumaca National High School, bagged the gold trophy in the Class B category for her stamp collection entry "Heart of the Ocean." Her sister, Collie Marie, 14, a third year student of the same school, won the gold trophy in Class A for her collections on boats.

Donna Betancurt, a third year college student from Bicutan, received a silver trophy in Class C for her entry "Ocean—An Issue."

The exhibit, held from Aug. 31 to Sept. 2 at the Singapore National Library, attracted 86 youths from all 10 Asean member-countries—Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar), Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. It coincided with Asean's 40th anniversary celebration.

The project of the Asean Committee of Culture and Information and the Singapore Philatelic Museum aimed to foster international understanding, exchange of creative ideas, knowledge and relationship through philatelic activities.

Aliyaah Xenah Akala, 14, a student from Sacred Heart College in Lucena City, has also been reaping international honors in stamp exhibitions.

On June 17, Akala's collections, titled "Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II," was proclaimed the "2007 ASEN Youth Champion of Champions" in the National Topical Stamp Show in Irving, Texas, USA.

School projects

Known among stamp collectors as the "World Series of Philately Exhibition," the exhibit was sponsored by the Americans Stamp Association of Philatelic Exhibitors.

The Marquez sisters said they started collecting stamps as a hobby during their elementary years as part of school projects.

"I started when I was in Grade 5. My enthusiasm was aroused by the stamp collection of my Tito [Uncle] Gex Albaro are never still being imprinted, I often pestered him with questions on how to collect stamps and that's it. Since then, my interest in collecting different stamps continued to 'develop,'" Collie said in an interview in their house in Gumaca.

The enamored youth, Gerson Banares, is the original avid collector in the family.

"I just shared them the passion involved in stamp collection. We now even exchanged stamps with each other to enrich our collections. I'm very proud of them with their achievements," said Banares. He admitted that he never had any experience in joining philatelic exhibitions, except those sponsored by the Quezon Philatelic Society (QPS), of which he and his two nieces are members.

"I now have a worthwhile collection of stamps," he said proudly.

The sisters are children of Rolando Marquez, a driver, and Janet, an entrepreneur.

Exchanging stamps

Jolly learned from her uncle to communicate with all stamp collectors through letters with the goal of sharing and exchanging stamps.

"Every time we read about any stamp collector with a mailing address, we will write the collector through snail mail to exchange stamps. Striking a deal is easy since there is an equivalent swap on the exchange arrangement," she said.

"We plan to exhibit our stamp collections in school to arouse other students to also start their own," Collie said. She and her sister said they were the only collectors among the students.

In December last year, they learned from Stanley Ilao, QPS president, about a national stamp collection exhibit to be held in Li, weaving footlocks in Manila as a qualifying round for the Asean exhibit in Singapore.

"It was a three-day contest with entries from different philatelic organizations across the country. We just submitted our stamp collections for registration," Jolly said.

"After I received and verified the information that my sisters had won the qualifying rounds, I immediately went to their rooms and broke the news to them that they were bound for Singapore and they should be ready with their passports," Banares recalled.

Collie recalled: "It was too good to be true. But when he showed us the text messages and personally received the call from Manila later, that's it. We were both extremely happy and excited that we would be able to reach Singapore."

The Asean and Singapore sponsors shouldered all the expenses, plane fares and hotel accommodations of the participants.

COLLIE Marie Marquez (left) and elder sister Jolly show the glass trophies they won in the first Youth Asean Stamp Exhibition in Singapore.

Friendship

Dr. Balaji Sadasivan, Singapore's senior minister of state for foreign affairs and information, communications and the arts, presented the awards at the winning entries.

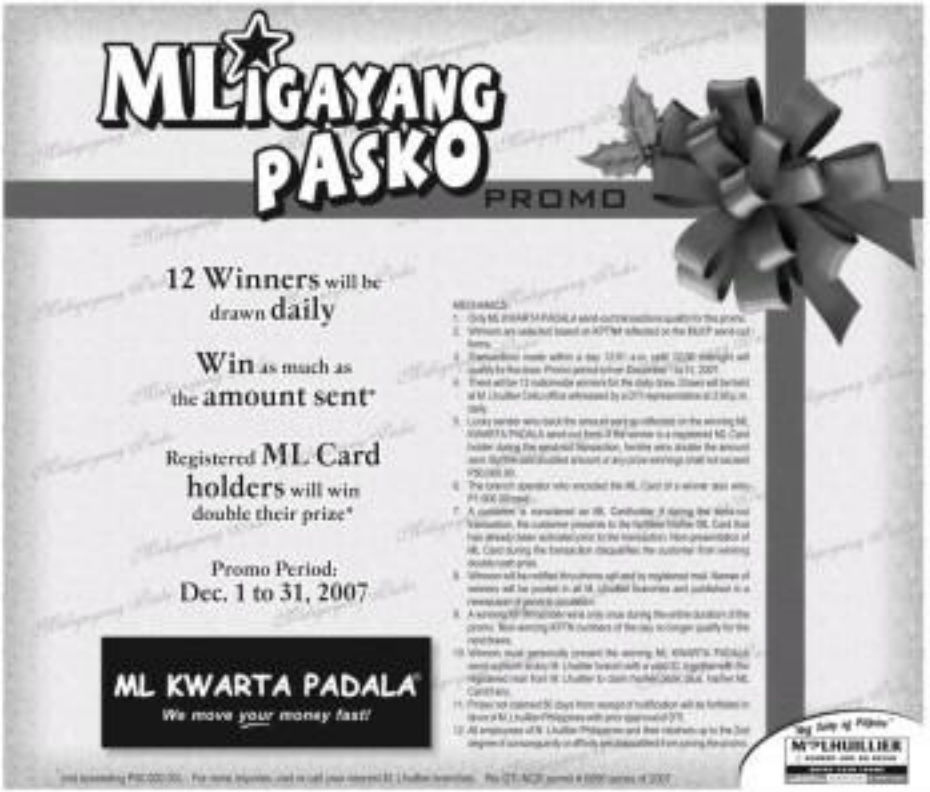
In his speech, a copy of which was posted to the Asean website, Sadasivan said: "The Youth Asean Stamp Club Exhibition is one fine example of how people from different parts of Asean can come together in a unique way to share their experiences and build bonds of friendship."

The winners received glass trophies, certificates of award, and personalized souvenirs of the event.

The Philippine delegation included Asean Tanggol Cruz, board director and former president of the Filipinas Stamp Collectors Club, and another official.

The Marquez sisters said they enjoyed every minute of their stay in Singapore, especially the fellowship with young collectors from other Asean countries.

They thanked Monsignor Ramon Nano of the Diocese of Lucena, a science stamp collector with a rare collection, for his help.



SPORTS

Phone Pals, Realtors derail foes

By June Navarro

THE SUSPENSION OF MAC CARDOsa has served Ronnie Magsaysay good stead.

The Talk 'N Text sniper enjoyed all the shooting room last night and led the Phone Pals to a 107-115 demolition of the 4th Express in the Smart-PBA Philippine Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Normally sharing the minutes with Cardona, Rizada exploited his extended playing time to fire 25 points, 19 of them in the first half when the Phone Pals tore the Express' defense apart.

Cardona, who double-cut 33.4 points on outing, was suspended for a game and fined P20,000 for hitting a driving Chevalier Tenghoy with a clothesline tackle during Talk 'N Text's record victory over Welcoat.

"We lost our top scorer and he (Mac-Mac) knows that he has to step up," said Talk 'N Text coach Derrick Pumaren.

Rizada, whose numbers plummeted due southward, scored the first seven points of the match as the Phone Pals took a 14-4 lieutenant they sustained throughout.

The Phone Pals improved to 6-4 while the Express took their fourth straight loss and dropped to 3-9.

Jun Cortes made it a three-way tie at 5-4 by rolling in six fourth-straight sets after decapping Alaska, 103-96, in the second game.

Kelly Williams again paced the Nationals with 25 points and nine rebounds while Ryan Reyes added 17 points on top of eight rebounds and three steals.

Meanwhile, lawyer Chito Salud took a leave of absence as legal counsel of the league effective yesterday until Jan. 10, the day when the board of governors convenes to settle the commissionership issue. PBA officers to charge Jimmy Barrios said Salud and Nestor Echauz don't anchor Alaska are the two remaining candidates for the PBA commissioner's post.

Aplus METRO

DID YOU KNOW

On Dec. 8, 1941, or the day after Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, Japanese aircraft attacked Manila, Baguio, Tarlac and Clark Field in Pampanga. On Dec. 10, they bombarded the Ayuntamiento and Escolta in Manila. Japan's naval forces landed in Lingayen Gulf, Pangasinan on Dec. 22 that same year.

Cyd L. Arnaldo, Inquirer Research

LANTERNS GALORE

The University of the Philippines campus in Quezon City was ablaze with rainbow-colored lanterns for the traditional Lantern Parade held on Tuesday. Left: Mobile Art's Bayanihan was the object of an art lesson for UP Pan Am students. Right: Lanterns using the colorful "dun" jeepneys that ply the campus were a crowd favorite.

Ailing doctor traffic jam casualty

Ambulance breakdown prevents transport of patient to hospital

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A MASSIVE TRAFFIC JAM ON Edsa Tuesday afternoon caused an ambulance transporting a 68-year-old doctor to a hospital to break down when its radiator overheated after the vehicle was stuck in traffic for hours.

As a result, it took nearly an hour for concerned bystanders to find another vehicle to take the sick doctor to the hospital.

By the time Dr. Amelia de la Cruz, owner of A. de la Cruz Memorial Hospital in Cavite City, got to the Philippine Heart Center, it was already too late.

Doctors tried their best to revive her but she was pronounced dead at 3:30 p.m., an hour after the ambulance carrying her broke down at the intersection of Edsa and Roxas Road in Quezon City.

The incident was witnessed by reporters who were at the Quezon City Police District headquarters on Edsa, across the site where the ambulance broke down.

Based on what the reporters were able to find out, the ambulance exited from the Cavite hospital and was taking Dr. de la Cruz, who had suffered a cardiac arrest, to the Philippine Heart Center.

The ambulance, however, got stuck in traffic at Edsa Magsaysay. By the time it got to Roxas Road, the vehicle stopped because the radiator had overheated.

Reporters tried to seek help from policemen at the QCPD Kamuning Station 10 but the lawmen said they did not have the keys to their patrol car.

James Dalgid, a computer operator of the Bureau of Internal Revenue who was driving by the area, immediately offered to take the patient to the hospital on board his car.

Detained ex-solon confined in Makati hospital

By Julie M. Aurelio and DJ Yap

FORMER CONGRESSMAN MINDORO Rep. Amelito Villarosa, who is detained at the New Bilibid Prisons after being convicted of murder, has been confined since last week at the Makati Medical Center in Makati City.

This was confirmed yesterday on the issuance by NBP penal superintendent Jessica Leopardo who said Villarosa was transferred in the MMC last week.

Leopardo, however, refused the request to the MMC hospital when asked for the reason behind Villarosa's confinement, saying he was not familiar with the latter's medical records.

The inquirer tried to contact hospital officials but was told the staff was having their Christmas party.

Sought for more information on Villarosa's condition, Dr. Eric Ivanhoe, chief of the MMC patient relations office, said he was not authorized to give any information about the patient.

The inquirer then talked to the NBP guards stationed outside Villarosa's room.

They confirmed that the former congressman was resting inside but said that they did not know when the murder convict was taken to the hospital or for what illness.

According to them, they were assigned to guard the hospital room only yesterday morning.

However, meanwhile, said Villarosa was being treated for high blood pressure and pneumonia. They added that he also has a history of asthma.

On Christmas Eve last year, he was confined at the same hospital for high blood pressure and a swollen leg due to diabetes.

Then Bureau of Corrections Director Nicanor Faeldon last denied that Villarosa had been granted a "bodabot furlough."

In a text message, BuCor Director Ricardo Diquit said that four doctors were attending to the former congressman.

"The BuCor will entrust the data to have when he is discharged from the hospital," Diquit added.

NBP insiders, however, said that Villarosa locked "normal" and "healthy" when he was spotted at the NBP chapel last week.

"Except for his old age, he looked normal, not sickly at all a week ago," one of the sources told the inquirer.

The former congressman was even able to speak to the livelihood center near his cell, the source added.

Late 2004, a Quezon City judge meted out the death sentence to Villarosa and six barangay for the murder of Michael and Brad Quiroos in 1997.

The sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment with the abolition of the death penalty.

SNACKS FOR SALE
Affectation finger food like squid balls, shrimp balls, chicken balls, fish balls and kikiam are sold at this mall-within-an-interesting-name.

Suspected cell phone snatcher shot dead

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A MAN WHO KILLED BY THE police in a shootout on Tuesday night in Novaliches, Quezon City, several minutes after he allegedly took a man's cell phone at gunpoint.

Police have yet to identify the slain man who was described as between 25 and 30 years old, around 5'7" to 5'8" in height, fair-skinned and of medium build. He was clad in a white T-shirt, black jacket and denim pants.

SPO1 Margarito Reyno, desk officer of the Quezon City Police District Novaliches Station 4, said incident happened at around 9:30 p.m. Tuesday on Bansalan Street, Barangay Nicanor Zabala. Police after the unidentified suspect fired on policemen who were chasing him.

Reyno said that based on the report, the policemen were forced to shoot back in self-defense.

The suspect died on the spot.

Before the incident, the unidentified man allegedly grabbed the cell phone of James Barsate, 21, a resident of the same barangay.

Barsate said that he was strolling home when the man blocked his path and declared a hold-up. He then sought help from policemen who were on patrol in the area.

Police investigators said they were trying to determine the identity of the slain suspect.

GMA earns 'pogi' points siding with farmers

PRESIDENT GLORIA SCORED pogi points in siding with the landless farmers who have won public sympathy in their fight for possession of 144 hectares of land in Hacienda Luisita.

But she knows that keeping the farmers doesn't end there, even since the present owners of the land, San Miguel Corp. (SMC), won't naturally take the decision sitting down.

The SMC, which has invested millions of pesos in the land to make it into an agro-industrial resort, will go back to the Supreme Court.

In 1998, the high court ruled in favor of the Quisumbing family, the original owners, to make the land, subject to government expropriation under its land reform program, an agro-industrial estate.

San Miguel Corp., an affiliate of SMC, has since bought the land from the Quisumbings.

President Arroyo knows that the high tribunal seldom reverses itself.

The case will take years to decide. By then, GMA shall have been out of office and will no longer be affected if the decision doesn't favor the farmers.

* * *

If you read the side of the Quisumbings in a front-page story in another daily, you will find that most of the farmers who staged the 1,700-kilometer march in Manila were not even tenants of the land.

Under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), only tenants of land expropriated by the government are beneficiaries of CARP.

Before the Catholic Church took up the cudgels for the landless farmers, it should first have checked if they were tenants of the land in question.

* * *

Sen. Gregorio Honasan, chair of the Senate committee on land reform, said the Premiere should have seen the bigger picture in the controversy.

The bigger picture is the economic improvement for the whole town of Tarlac and the entire country, not just the interests of 700 farmers involved there."

The trade issue in the Luisitas case, Honasan said, is how to make full use of the land in question.

Honasan, who led several congressional inquiries to improve the lot of the small soldiers, should have sided with the small farmers outright, but he didn't.

Not just yet, anyway.

Honasan says that Mr. Arroyo should also have looked into the interests of industrial investors, like SMC, who might put their money somewhere else.

* * *

Okay, let's grant that the Supreme Court will reverse itself and give the land in question to the Luisitas farmers.

And then, what?

Can they put up billions of pesos the way SMC does now to make the 144 hectares an agro-industrial estate?

Which investor would be crazy enough to put his money in the venture knowing that his billion investing SMC, will go on the shoot and of the bargain?

* * *

Eat and drink moderately during the holidays.

Otherwise, you might not be able to enjoy Christmas, 2008.

Natural parkers do look forward to January and February.

Most of their climate-wise cronies heard in their eating and drinking during the Christmas season.

It is medicinal for them. In the US, those who die due to the excesses of the holiday season had a "holiday heart."

So, take it easy on the lechon, the roast beef, the inche flor, and the beer and liquor.

You will have more of them in the next holiday season over you.

300 families lose homes in Caloocan, Pasay fires

By Nancy C. Carvajal and Julie M. Aurelio

WITHOUT A FEW DAYS TO GO before Christmas, the holidays appear bleak for 300 families who were left homeless when fires reportedly caused by unattended candles broke out in Caloocan City yesterday morning and in Pasay City on Tuesday afternoon.

Supt. Aries Reyes of the Caloocan City Bureau of Fire Protection said some 50 families were affected when a fire hit Barangay dagupan, one of the city's most thickly populated areas.

Reyes said the fire started in a two-story house owned by Lilia Caparoso, 48, of Block 28, Lot 16-A, Phase 1, F-1 Barangay 14.

No one was reported hurt but the fire spread quickly due to strong winds.

Most of the houses in the area were also made of light materials.

Reyes said at least 18 houses were razed while damage to property was estimated at more than P1 million.

The fire started at 9:13 a.m. and was placed under control several hours later.

In Pasay City, over 240 families were affected by a fire-hour fire which burned down their homes at 4:40 p.m. Tuesday.

Arson investigator SPO1 Alfredo Delfin Jr said they were looking into the possibility that a lit candle in the house of Helen Monsito as the source of G. Vil. Jamaica Street and Taft Avenue may have caused the blaze.

The fire was so intense that the Light Rail Transit operations from the Central Station to Vito Cruz, Honasan said, is now to make full use of the land in question.

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METROBRIEFS

Cops nab Irishman

A 67-YEAR-OLD year-old expatriate was nabbed by the Manila Police District for reportedly molesting young boys in Sta. Mesa the other night. Frank Massey, a native of Northern Ireland, was nabbed with his alleged male victim, Marlene Fraga, 41, after the police received a complaint that Massey was even touching and fondling several children aged 8 to 14. PO3 Virginia Mendoza of Station 6 said. Massey however, denied the allegations and said he was merely helping the young boys.

Alison W. Lopez

New school building

A NEW school building donated by a group of Chinese businessmen led by Ismael Lucio Tan was inaugurated in Tondo, Manila, yesterday. Mayor Alfredo Lim thanked the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. for sharing their resources with the students of the Isla Jacinto Elementary School by providing eight new classrooms. He also cited the other donors, among them Mary Go Ng, Jimmy Chong and Graciosa Moises "Bobby" Lim. Tan said their contribution was part of the Schools for the Barrios project of the FCCII, which has so far built more than 8,000 classrooms nationwide. "This is our humble contribution to our youth because we believe that good education is the best gift we can give them," he said.

Alison W. Lopez

Foul play or suicide?

A 41-YEAR-OLD boy allegedly hanged himself at the fire wall of an old bus terminal before dawn yesterday in Quezon City. Quezon City Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (CIDU) CIDU reports identified the teenager as Marvin Pascua, a resident of Pinti, Tondo. A rope was looped around his neck and his body was hanging from a steel pipe protruding from a 10-foot wall inside the old Pandacan bus terminal at the corner of Pinaverde and Quezon Avenues in San Francisco del Monte. The body was discovered at 4 a.m. by a passenger of a public utility jeepney which was using the area as a terminal. Police said they were trying to find out how the boy, a resident of Tondo, Manila, ended up in the area.

Jeannette I. Andrade

METRO
Citizen's Call
Your City of Affections and Disaffections is made up of stories.
Your stories. Tell us all about it.

Suspected illegal recruiter nabbed

By Alison W. Lopez

A WOMAN ACCUSED OF RECRUITing students who studied out in new deals to Malaysia has been arrested in an entrapment operation conducted by the National Bureau of Investigation.

The NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division (Ahtrad) led by head agent Ferdinand Lavin described the suspect as Evangeline Cruz Manapsal alias Gemma, 37, a resident of Bulacan and Quezon City.

Lavin said they arrested Manapsal with the help of the younger sister of one of the eight women rescued from a sex den in Kota Kinabalu by the Asian Good Church Worldwide earlier this month.

The eight women, who arrived in Manila on Dec. 13, said Manapsal had promised them jobs as entertainers or customers with a daily salary of P4,500 to P6,500.

The NBI said that "Nancy" the sister of one of the eight victims, contacted Manapsal who promised her a job in Malaysia. The suspect was later arrested in an entrapment operation.

Lawyer Virginia Jose, who represents the eight victims, said more than 30 Filipino women are still detained in prostitution dens in Malaysia reportedly managed by Manapsal's sister, Arlene Lucio, and three Malaysians named "Nelson," "Sabeng" and "Tommy" all of whom remain at large.

Carpenter has kidney problem

JESSE TRAMPE'S LETTER to the Inquirer talks about his love for his wife and wife and his kidney ailment.

The 53-year-old carpenter, a resident of 98 Avenue, Block 7, Barangay Pinyahan in Makati City, said he is now unable to support his wife, Hedy, as he is undergoing dialysis at the Asia Renal Care Philippines Inc. at 75 Quezon Avenue, Barangay Sto. Domingo in Quezon City twice a week. Each session costs P2,350.

TRAMPE

Trampe is appealing to kindhearted people to help him. He financially "para po makapagpagaan siya po ang aking buhay (so that you can lengthen my life)."

Those who want to help him can call him at 751-2472 or deposit their donations in his bank account to any Landbank branch (account number 2680134200).

Sandagon R. Alcantara

Businessman likely to win S. Korea polls

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREANS went to the polls on Wednesday expected to choose as president a former CEO vowing to knock the economy into shape and drum up to the World, but whose authority could be weakened by a feud-hinted legislature.

The chief legally allowed spitting in public a week ago declared former Hyundai Group executive and ex-Seoul mayor Lee Myung-bak on course to win the night, five-year term to lead the world's 13th largest economy, ending 10 years of liberal presidents.

Back in days before the election frank allegations of financial corruption can haunt, which analysts said would dent Lee's lead but not derail him.

That leaves the prospect of his becoming the first president since which under criminal investigation.

"We need to change the regime that has been in power for the last 10 years," Lee told reporters at a polling station, sticking to his campaign theme that his conservative agenda and can do approach would restore a once booming economy.

On Monday, parliament voted to appoint a special investigator to look into charges that Lee, who denies any wrongdoing, was linked to an investment firm suspected of swindling millions of dollars from investors.

Even if he is implicated, the outcome of the probe is unlikely to be resolved before the inauguration on Feb. 25. A sitting president cannot be prosecuted for such crimes.

Lee's dazzling lead of nearly 30 percentage points over his closest opponent in last week's polls, and the probe, have roiled enthusiasm in a country used to close races in the five previous elections since its first democratic presidential vote in 1987.

Voters put the economy first in the race, political rival, and are ready to make Lee the first former top executive to run the country.

They have previously seen an ex-prisoner, two defendants who fought decades of dictatorship and a business tycoon lawyer to the presidential Blue House.

The National Election Commission said turnout as of mid-afternoon was down by about 7 percent from the same time five years ago, when the race was much closer.

Pollsters say they expect about 60 percent of the country's 37.5 million voters to cast ballots, down from 71 percent in 2002. Voting ends at 0900 GMT.

Lee's closest rival is the left-leaning Chung Dong-young, who served as the cabinet of outgoing President Roh Moo-hyun and is seen as his heir.

"This election is a battle between truth and lies," Chung told reporters when he voted. He later went to the tomb round to help in the clean-up of South Korea's recent oil spill.

South Korea has seen a strong flow of cash under the Roh government. Lee is likely to be less generous. He wants South's lagging third more slowly to progress the North nations is ending its nuclear arms program.

Financial markets have been encouraged by Lee's pledges to make life easier for foreign investors, and cut through the red tape he says is stifling local business, especially the giant conglomerates behind South Korea's economic rise.

Lee, nicknamed "the bulldozer" for his hard-charging style and who turned 66 on election day, says he wants to bring 7 percent growth. That compares with an average of a little over 4 percent during Roh's rule.

But economists say Lee's targets are bold in order for a country running under increasing competitive pressure from neighboring China and Japan while one of its biggest export markets, the United States, is looking at no economically tough 2008.

The economists want Lee to put in goaded reforms to help South Korea transform from a manufacturing and export-based economy and better develop the finance and other services sectors.

Reuters

Lee Myung-bak

EU faces showdown over CO2 emissions

BRUSSELS—THE EUROPEAN Commission faces a showdown between industrial and environmental champions on Wednesday over how to set emissions caps to ban double-dose cuts to fight climate change without harming European carmakers.

At a meeting of senior EU officials on Tuesday night, supporters of Germany's heavy industry ministers won a longer phase-in period for fines on manufacturers who fail to meet mandatory limits on exhaust emissions of the main greenhouse gas blamed for global warming, EU sources said.

Vice President for Enterprise Guenter Verheugen, an outspoken defender of the German car industry, also sought to exclude the level of fines on manufacturers that do not cut average car emissions to 130 grams per km through engine technology.

But Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, a Greek, argued for practically unchanging fines from 2012 in an effective defense to have more incentives to invest in clean technology and produce lighter cars to meet the EU standards.

The two men have been at loggerheads since the EU executive set the headline goal last January of reducing emissions to 120 grams per km by 2012, with the additional 10 grams coming from biofuels and measures to improve motor fuel efficient driving.

They are due to appear side-by-side on Wednesday to announce how the Commission proposes implementing the targets, notably the mandatory limits on fines for those who exceed the limits.

Even if they agree, it will not be the last word. Member states and the European Parliament must back the legislation.

German producers such as BMW and Mercedes-Benz make heavier vehicles and their emissions are rising while France's Peugeot and Renault and Fiat of Italy make lighter cars whose emissions are falling.

Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso summoned the two commissioners to a meeting on Tuesday to try to reconcile their divergent positions but differences persisted, the sources said.

On Tuesday night, Commission officials agreed that the fines would be phased in over more than the three years originally planned from 2012, but the level is still in dispute.

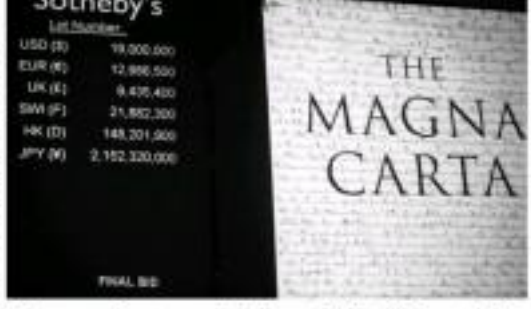
Pending for more time, figures in Volvo of the European Automobile Manufacturers Association, said: "Industry is cost-against legislation but it wants the right system to be stable a bit more flexible to cope with production cycles and market developments." An EU source said the burden of making emissions cuts would be shared more or less evenly between makers of heavy and light cars.

Germany had argued that an 80 percent so-called floor curve, coming most of the cuts on makers of smaller cars. Britain had demanded a 25 percent level that would favor "premium" car manufacturers. The source said the outcome would be to the middle.

Environmental campaigners say the 27-nation EU's role as a world leader in the fight against global warming is on the line.

"The EU's credibility on climate change is at stake. It must live the challenge and not back down in the face of well-interested lobbying from the car industry," Tony Bosworth of Friends of the Earth said in a statement.

Reuters



BIDS ARE projected at a rare copy of the Magna Carta are shown at a Sotheby's New York real estate exhibit for $21.3 million on Dec. 18 in New York City. The document is one of only nine still in existence and is the fourth to be sold at auction. The Magna Carta is the most important document ever auctioned at Sotheby's.

Magna Carta sold for $21.3M at NY auction

NEW YORK—ONE OF ONLY 17 existing copies of the Magna Carta, an 800-year-old English royal manuscript selling and the rights of land, sold at auction at Sotheby's in New York Tuesday for $21.3 million.

Arguably the most important document ever to be auctioned, the iconic vellum manuscript was bought by David Rubenstein, a US lawyer and founder of the conservative Washington-based private equity firm The Carlyle Group.

Rubenstein, who was a domestic policy advisor to former president Jimmy Carter, said his office from more just 300 meters from the US National Archives, where the document has been on display for most of the last 23 years.

"I visited this on several occasions and in doing so I thought that the three most important documents in Western civilization were the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution," he told reporters.

"I thought it was very important that five Magna Carta stay in the United States and I was convinced that the only copy in The United States might escape as a result of this auction," Rubenstein concluded.

He said he would loan the record of charter, which it dated 1297 and bears the wax seal of King Edward I, to the US National Archives.

"I have always believed that there was no more basic document to our country, even though it wasn't drafted by our country. I think it is the basis for the Declaration of Independence and the basis for the Constitution," he said.

"It's a privilege to be an owner of it. But I'm really just a temporary custodian of it because it's really a gift to the American people for them to be able to see it," he said.

Rubenstein's Carlyle Group is considered a secretive organization that specializes in defense industry and aerospace industry companies and has numerous former senior such as former president George Bush among its advisors.

Perhaps tellingly, Rubenstein opted to bid for the document by telephone, even though he was in the sale room.

"I think it's a great day for our country," Rubenstein said, adding he was "very" Rubenstein said, after paying the lower range of the document's pre-sale estimate of $20 million to $30 million.

"We were thrilled with the sale, we were thrilled to have the privilege of offering the most important document in the world," said Sotheby's Vice Chairman and The evening's auctioneer, David Redden, after the sale.

He described the vellum manuscript as "the great-great-great-grandfather of some of the great documents—at least in America—of freedom." The document is one of only nine of 17 remaining examples ever likely to be sold. Most of the rest belong to Britain's national archives, cathedrals or universities while the only other copy outside Britain belongs to Australia.

The manuscript, most likely sealed at Runnymede, established the rule of law in England at a time of disagreements between King John and the English barons. It was first issued in 1215 and confirmed in English law in 1297.

AFP

Japan's 'Hidden Christians' face extinction

HITSUJI ISLAND—ONE 40 one, she carried relics—a medal of the Virgin Mary, a crucifix and other revered objects—secretly taken from a cupboard and placed on an altar for a Christmas Eve mass passed down through centuries from Mayuri's earliest Christian.

Then, kneeling in the simple hall built where mayuri are said to have been beamed secrets long, ceramic island 400 years ago, the elders received them as they have and make the sign of the Cross.

The Amenoo-shud descendants descendants of "Kakure Kirishitan," or Hidden Christians, who kept their religion alive on Hitsuji and in other isolated pockets of Japan during 250 years of suppression, whispering their vows in the thousands of swaying and bleeding Christ with local beliefs.

These days, the religion faces a sudden threat of extinction as young people, like those elsewhere in rural Japan, leave their homes in search of jobs, drifting away from their gods and the rituals that know them.

"It's sad. The tradition of our ancestors is disappearing," said Ayako Matsuyama, one of those gathered to observe "Oshinnichi" and "Oyasa

YASUDAKA Tetsuzo, a descendant of Japan's "Kakure Kirishitan," or Hidden Christians, conducts a ritual in front of holy relics on Ikitsuki Island Dec. 14.

ju"—Christmas Eve and Christmas—last weekend, the last Saturday and Sunday before the solstice celebration.

"We inherited this 'old' Christianity from our ancestors and we wanted to continue it forever. But young people don't feel that way," added the 70-year-old former worker of tube, or rice wine.

First brought to Japan by Portuguese missionaries in 1549, Christianity was banned a few decades later in 1614, initiating a period of brutal persecution that forced the faithful to choose between martyrdom or hiding their beliefs.

Born each as conversion and conversion that would be sustained only by priests were lost. Others took on elements of Buddhist ancestor worship, indigenous Islam with its focus on purification, and folk traditions such as prayers for good crops.

Modern or hanging scrolls depicting saints and martyrs, often with Japanese features, were hidden in cupboards as "sanctuaries" ("godo in the closet") and only taken out on special days.

In an apparent echo of the bread and wine of the Eucharist, elders still share sweet rice and sake as part of the Christmas Eve and other services.

Mayuri "medal" also comes from the altar.

Disseminated orally and in secret, Latin "words" chants, "oratios" in Japanese, but still has symbolic meaning.

"They preserved the style and form of the Christianity that they inherited, but the knowledge were no longer from the Bible and changed into prayers for local martyrs, so in that sense it can be seen as a Japanese animist religion," said Shigeo Nakamura, curator of an island museum dedicated to the hidden "Kakure Kirishitan" for sect.

When Emperor Catholic missionaries returned with the lifting of the ban in 1873, some Japanese Christians accepted their teachings, but others clung to what they saw as the true faith of their forbears.

Many stories, who take many of his generation learned "oratios" when he turned 30, others he doesn't understand the significant phrases, some consider of original Latin or Greek, such as "Ten Maria" and "ascension" (amen), others involving Buddhist prayers.

"I thought I had to learn it because I had been handed down and it was a kind of memorial for those who died," he said.

Reuters

Witness says Diana's driver was too reckless

LONDON—A WITNESS AT THE inquest into the deaths of Princess Diana and boyfriend Dodi Fayed said Tuesday that she had been frightened by the reckless actions of the man who drove the couple's car into a fatal crash.

Michel Daniels, a British banker and conservator who was on the staff of Fayed's uncle Ahmed, said she rode in a Range Rover driven by Henri Paul when the couple returned to Paris late on August 1997.

"I should be dead. I was positive I would be killed in that," Daniels testified.

British and French police held Paul responsible for the crash on Aug. 31, 1997, in which he died, along with Diana and Fayed. They found evidence that his blood-alcohol level was over the legal limit and that he was speeding.

Daniels told with Paul in a runway outside Ritzer and Fayed were driven by their regular chauffeur from the airport to central Paris. Other witnesses have described paparazzi photographers in cars and on motorcycles pursuing the couple on the line.

"Henri Paul almost killed us. Instead to God, he was driving very too fast and recklessly, and I was saying 'Slow down, slow down' but nobody's saying and nobody's doing anything," Daniels said.

"We went down the freeway and he was still driving easily and I still don't understand what we were trying to outrun... I couldn't see any motorcycles," she said.

The car crashing like a missile through the tunnel. He drove from the left-hand lane all the way across the freeway to the left side ramp and the Range Rover almost tipped over and I was sure we were all going to die," she said.

She added him "probably a really nice man" but criticized his driving.

Daniels disputed assertions made by Mohamed Al Fayed that his son and Princess Diad checked to marry and died a day before the intended announcement of an engagement, and that Diana was pregnant with Fayed's baby.

"Look, nobody told ever knew that it existed here hooked up," Daniels said.

"It was too soon. They had just met. They were having fun getting to know each other, and to think they I cannot believe at all that [Dodi] would have been premature in a situation like this to ask her to marry him. I do not believe that," Daniels said.

As for the alleged pregnancy, Daniels said: "She was not pregnant. Period."

AP

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Queaño

58 dead in Pakistan train crash

MEHRABPUR—A PAKISTANI EXPRESS TRAIN packed with holiday travellers derailed on Wednesday killing 58 people and injuring more than 120, officials said.

The Karachi Express caught fire minutes after it left the station in the southern city of Rohri, where most of its carriages came off the rails and rammed into each other near the town of Mehrabpur, officials said.

A senior railway official ruled out sabotage, saying a faulty track was believed to have caused the crash.

Rescue workers said 58 people were killed and 123 injured, but the toll of dead and injured could rise. Some passengers cried out from inside submerged carriages.

"Please, get us out," one begged.

Luggage, train wheels and other wreckage littered the scene in the desert about 300 km north of Karachi.

Soldiers from a nearby army camp carried the wounded on stretchers and hundreds of onlookers gathered at the site.

"According to our update, there are 58 bodies and 122 wounded. Forty of them are in critical condition," said Anwar Kazmi, an official with the Edhi ambulance service.

There were conflicting tolls, with some other officials giving a lower number of deaths.

"We're removing wreckage, injured people and dead bodies are still trapped," senior railway official Mohammad Yunis Khan said.

The train crashed at about 2:20 a.m. and many of those on board were heading home for the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha on Friday.

Military and railway officials at the scene said they did not know the cause of the crash but the general manager of Pakistan's railway system, Syed Saeed, ruled out sabotage.

"There's a joint in the track which is welded and that has broken. It shrinks in winter. There are many fissures on the track and sometimes this joint breaks," Saeed said.

One passenger reported hearing a loud rattling sound just before the crash.

Another railway official said 14 of the train's 18 carriages had come off the rails and four of them were completely destroyed.

Announcements were made in nearby mosques asking people's help.

"Initially there were no government or private rescuers. We did it on our own," said villager Mohammad Ismail.

"We used lamps and torches to take people out," Mohammad Iqbal, an injured passenger lying on stock, said the train had suddenly begun rocking violently.

"I don't know what happened. All of a sudden the train started rushing ahead and we fell down," Iqbal said.

"It was all darkness. We were lying on the roads for three to four hours in the cloth," about 150 people were killed in July 2005 when a crowded passenger train rammed into another at a station, also in Sindh province, and a third train hit the wreckage. Reuters

PAKISTANI paramilitary troops and rescue workers search for dead bodies and injured passengers on the site of a derailed train near Mehrabpur, about 400 km north of Karachi on Wednesday, Dec. 19. AP

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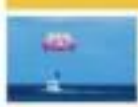

UN extends mandate of US troops

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN SECURITY Council voted on Tuesday to extend the mandates of US-led foreign forces in Iraq for one year, as requested by Iraq for what Baghdad said was the last time.

US troops are expected to remain in Iraq after the end of 2008, when the UN mandate will expire, but Baghdad wants to change the terms of their presence so that it will be based on bilateral agreements under discussion with Washington.

Iraq has said this is the last time it will request an extension of the UN mandate for foreign forces and it may ask for the mandate to be ended even sooner than the end of 2008.

Ambassador Hamid al-Bayati said Iraq was grateful to friendly countries who helped get rid of Saddam Hussein but "no Iraqi government official, indeed no Iraqi citizen, wants the presence of foreign forces on Iraqi soil one day longer than they are needed." President George W. Bush is under pressure to reduce troops in Iraq amid growing US public disappointment in the war, now more than 4 1/2 years after the March 2003 invasion.

A fall in violence helped by deployment of 30,000 US troops has allowed Washington to plan and begin a gradual drawdown of troops that will see 20,000 leave by July 2008.

Bayati said his government had, with the help of multinational forces, succeeded in improving the threat of a sectarian civil war and inflicted defeats on al-Qaida that left militants surrounded in isolated pockets.

"The Iraqi government has accomplished enormous steps towards the day when self-sustaining Iraqi security forces will be able to provide security to the Iraqi people," he said.

The Security Council resolution, which was passed unanimously, said the mandate would be reviewed by June 15, 2008 at the request of Baghdad and "it will terminate this mandate earlier if requested by the government of Iraq." Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said in the unrelated Iraq would need foreign troops to help defend it for another 10 years, but would not accept US bases indefinitely. Reuters

US judge orders CIA video hearings

WASHINGTON—A US JUDGE ON TUESDAY ordered the Bush administration to explain whether the CIA violated a court order by destroying videotapes of the harsh interrogations of two terrorism suspects.

US District Court Judge Henry Kennedy, who in 2006 had ordered the government to preserve information on prisoner mistreatment at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, scheduled a court hearing on the tapes for Friday, overriding government objections.

Lawyers for a group of Guantanamo Bay inmates contesting their detention had requested the hearing to learn whether the government had complied with the preservation order. They cited reports that information obtained from the interrogations implicated but exonerated Guantanamo detainees.

"We hope to establish a precedent to restrict the government's handling of evidence in our case ... and generally to require an accounting from a government that has admitted that it destroyed evidence," said David Remes, an attorney for the group of inmates.

He declined to comment on whether he believed any of his clients were implicated during the interrogations. Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE
Orillana fuels Dolphins /A25

SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy B. Molmisa Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Delos Santos

Lakers rip Bulls; Kings triumph /A26

Pacquiao: I'll lose only if I don't prepare hard enough

By Ray Lustre

MANNY PACQUIAO LIKELY PLAYS down his chances when ranged against quality opponents like Juan Manuel Marquez, lamenting the Filipino ring mainstay's different approach.

In high spirits, Pacquiao virtually declared that he will take the WBC super featherweight crown away from the Mexican champion when they clash anew on March 15 (March 16 in Manila) at Las Vegas.

"Depende ko rematindo lang ako kapag hindi nakapaghanda nang husto (I'll lose only if I don't prepare long and hard enough)," said Pacquiao during a press conference held at the Holiday Inn Casino Plaza in Ortigas.

"Mas kabisado pa niko noong laban kay (Erik) Morales at (Marco Antonio) Barrera. Ilang beses nakitako with my fights against Morales and Barrera), added Pacquiao. "Dapat ko kasing tuya ko (I should I use best him easily)."

Relief-looking gloves contribute keying defense. I'll fight him even without gloves," Pacquiao said in jest.

Pacquiao, who turned 29 on Monday, added that although the 34-year-old Marquez was still a superb fighter when his best days are behind him, he was outsmarted to have downed down a bit as compared to their first showdown that ended in a draw four years ago.

As always, however, Pacquiao refuses to be lulled into complacency.

"Hindi pumasok ang kompetensya kalangan nun nahahong training (I can't be too confident. I need to train longer than ever)."

Renowned trainer Freddie Roach, who graced the affair hosted by Solar Sports with international promoter Bob Arum and Top Rank and National Boxing Association Executive Director Lito Atienza, agreed, noting that Pacquiao intends to start whipping himself into shape before the year ends.

"Eight weeks of training (in the United States) will be enough," said Roach, noting that Pacquiao is the most intense and hardest working boxer he'll ever see.

"When he (Pacquiao) hits the heavy bag, it seems he likes to kill it," said Roach, who also stressed that his ward has become a "much better fighter" since Pacquiao-Marquez I in May 2006.

That time, Pacquiao knocked down Marquez thrice in the first round, but Marquez's finish off the Mexican as he injured his left hand and sustained blisters on his feet in the latter rounds.

"Again, we'll take the fight to him (Marquez)," said Roach. "And this time, he'll have to withstand not only with Manny's left but both hands."

For his part, Arum encouraged Filipinos to come to Las Vegas in droves to support the fight card, tentatively billed as "Unfinished Brothers".

Arum hated that he had secured a big block of tickets for Filipinos, thus securing them of affordable ticket rates of $600, $400, $300 and $200, though tickets at sales won't open until Friday at the Mandalay Bay Events Center.

"If Pacquiao fights before usually get 350,000 pay-per-view hits, our goal is 500,000 this time," said Arum.

Though Arum predicts a victory by Pacquiao, he said the contract guarantees a rematch in case of a Marquez victory.

If Pacquiao wins, Arum's plans is arrange a duel with David Diaz at UH Boxing July and vows against Ricky Hatton, whom Floyd Mayweather stopped in the eighth round recently, at 140 lbs.

For now, however, Arum's sight is focused on Pacquiao-Marquez II.

He wants Pacquiao to bring down Marquez, who's regarded behind Morales and Barrera back home, and clean up the 130-pound division first.

Pacquiao intends to do just that... pay a decent to an "Unfinished Business".

Road Kings book PBL semis ticket

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ERWIN STA. MARIA PLAYED THE GAME OF HIS LIFE and Cholo Villanueva delivered two free throws that lifted Toyota Balintawak past Mail and More in overtime, 81-78, and into the semifinals last night of the 2008 PBL V-Go Extreme Energy Drink Cup at The Arena in San Juan.

With Toyota holding a shaky 79-78 edge, Villanueva sunned two shooters in the final 34.6 seconds before Dan Read Kings Jolled The Connect last dash offensive to hook a shot in the hotel of three semifinal series opposite undefeated Negros starting today at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Villanueva's heroics prevented Sta. Maria's career-high 31 points that kept Toyota Balintawak afloat all game long.

The Road Kings were dragged into the no-tomorrow match when Mail and More forged a 69-62 victory Tuesday.

Toyota Balintawak will be seeking to round its semifinal duel against the vanished Negros squad, especially since the Road Kings will be playing a third straight match in as many days.

San Mig Coffee and Harbour Centre will also begin their semi-final duel today in a match that will feature the return of players who suited up for the national team that won the basketball title in the recent Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

Gabe Norwood, who ran the plays for the Nationals, will again run the Dragon in the 4 p.m. contest.

Reed Juntilla, Mark Isaboran and Larry Rodriguez are expected to provide support for Norwood as Dragon tries to extend its streak to 10 games.

Al Vergara will spearhead the Harbour Centre squad which joined Dragon in claiming outright semifinal berths by nailing the top two slots in the eliminations round.

"They have to play tough on both ends of the court to get past San Mig Coffee," said coach Jorge Gallent. "I expect it to provide us again with the big lift."

The Coffee Kings did not have to use their twice-to-beat advantage after they blasted the Medics, 77-65, to earn the right to meet Harbour Centre.

"This is no longer the elims and this is one crucial stage that you have to play with all your heart," said Gallent. "Besides, we will be facing a different team now."

San Mig Coffee is bolstered by Ian Sto. Tomas' awesome three-some of Ivan Haws, Peng Escobal and Ogie Menor, in the 2 p.m. tussle.

The scores

TOYOTA BALINTAWAK 81—Sta. Maria 31, Jose 14, Antonino 8, Jarin 8, Jazul 7, Villanueva 6, Faraon 1, Alfaro 0, Sta. Ana 0, Guevarra 0, Santiago 0

MAIL & MORE 78—Alfaro 16, Mia 15, Chua 11, Lewis 9, Dagan 7, Manuel 5, Calma 5, Sabuco 4, Sison 3, Bautista 2, Sison 1

Quarters: 19-17, 28-28, 47-48, 72-72, 81-78

CHOKE Villanueva (No. 9) fights for possession against Anna Mail and More players. Villanueva's free throws helped Toyota end a semifinal slot.

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Sadorra notches fourth win, climbs to 2nd spot

SADORRA

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SINGAPORE—OUTGOING FIDE MASTER Julio Catalino Sadorra is on a roll and is keeping the sputtering Philippines tougher going in the 2007 Singapore Masters Open chess tournament.

Now based here, Sadorra posted smashing victories over Indian IM Rathinam of India in the fourth round and FIDE Grandmaster (GM) to seize his total to 4.5 points and grab sole second place behind Georgian Grandmaster Zurab Azmaiparashvili, who bested a gutsier 5.0 opponent.

Sadorra, second with his file of 2699, Azmaiparashvili will square off with Sadorra in a crucial sixth-round encounter.

The 25 year-old Sadorra, who earned his first GM result in the recent Prospero Pichay Cup held in Pantabangan City, settled for a draw in the first round but swept his next four matches to take care from others counterparts GM Mark Paragua and Mc Oliver Dimaukling and Enrique Paciencia left off.

Paragua leaved in top seed GM Zhang Zhong of Singapore (Elo 2656) while Dimaukling and Paciencia yielded to Azmaiparashvili and Indonesian GM Susanto Megaranto, respectively to remain in 2.0 points.

Zhang, a former member of China's national team, also dumped IM Jayson Gonzales in the fourth round to climb to 3.5 points.

The fourth-ranked Megaranto, who got ousted from the chess World Cup in the first round, smashed Zhong's second by outclassing Paciencia in the fourth round.

Also with 4.0 points a Indian GM and No. 3 pick Dronvli Sandipan, who dismissed local lads GM We Shanhai and WGM Li Shanhai.

Dimaukling swept his first three assignments only to lose to Azmaiparashvili and Megaranto. Paciencia lost to Megaranto but won over WGM Nguyen Thi Thanh of Vietnam.

With only 2.0 points to show, Gonzales has dropped his bid for a third and final GM result.

Another Filipino hopeful, Mideolo Abelardo was in the same predicament after bowing to Fide Master Lim Pin Hsiang of Malaysia and beating FM Daniel Howard Fernandez of Singapore.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

I never took banned substances—Clemens

NEW YORK... ROGER CLEMENS DENIED allegations by his former trainer that he took performance-enhancing drugs, calling them "a dangerous and irresponsible charge" that no athlete should ever take."

The accusations against the seven-time Cy Young award winner from former trainer Brian McNamee were the most striking in last week's Mitchell Report on doping in Major League Baseball.

Former US senator George Mitchell said McNamee said he injected Clemens with steroids in 1998 while with the Toronto Blue Jays, and steroids and human growth hormone in 2000 and 2001, while with the New York Yankees.

"I want to state clearly and without qualification: I did not take steroids, human growth hormone or any other banned substances at any time in my baseball career or, in fact, my entire life," Clemens said on Tuesday in a statement issued through his agent, Randy Hendricks.

"These unfounded accusations represent a flagrant and destructive shortcut that no athlete should ever take."

"I am disappointed that my 21 years in public life have apparently not earned me the benefit of the doubt, but I understand that Sen. Mitchell's report has raised many serious questions.

I plan to publicly answer all of these questions at the appropriate time in the appropriate way. I only ask that in the meantime people not rush to judgment."

Another former McNamee client, Yankees pitcher Andy Pettitte, said last weekend that he took HGH twice while rehabbing from an injury in 2002. Mitchell said McNamee told him he injected Pettitte with HGH once on those times that year. *AP*

SPORTSWATCH

Derby 'Olympics' kicks off next year

THE WORLD CLASH OF RIVERSTONE, the 6-Cock Derby, one of the biggest cock-fighting events in the world, gets going next year at the Araneta Coliseum.

Dubbed the Olympics of cock-fighting, the event takes place on Jan. 25, 26 and Feb. 2.

"We are looking forward to another event that will be long remembered," product manager Francis Martinez at the upcoming Thunderbird Foam Finals said.

For bi-annual derby event brings together top sportsmen cockers from the United States, Canada, Middle East, Spain, Germany and Japan, challenging the country's top local gamefowl breeders.

Weight limits for all entries are a minimum of 1.8kg and maximum of 2.5kg (4 lbs. 2oz. to 5 lbs. 8 oz.). Computerized weight-taking will be strictly enforced for all fights.

The World Slasher Cup Invitational 6-Cock Derby is hosted by the Philippine Champions. For details log on to www.internationalmain.com and www.thunderbird.com.ph or call 917-2525 or 911-5781 to 86, 8881 and 8883.

Mighty Menthols gain finals

THE MIGHTY MENTHOLS PUMP TO victory over Ateneo and Letran at the most crucial stage of the game to down Emilio Aguinaldo College, 69-68, and advance finals berth in the Manila Amateur Basketball League held recently at the Arellano gym in Manila.

Ateneo, a former University of the Philippines standout, bagged for the Mighty Menthols with 20 points and Letran's Jason Ilano who made the difference. The result allowing Dave Santelices to clinch triples as the Mighty Menthols finally pulled away for good. He finished with 18 points.

The Mighty Menthols go for the title today as they battle Colegio de San Juan de Letran for the championship.

Ilano also shone for the Mighty Menthols as he also came through with big baskets with his one-on-one forays.

LPC hosts X'mas derby

BIGTIME CROCKFIGHTING SHOWDOWN unfolds in Las Piñas Coliseum today as the annual LPC Christmas 3-cock derby throws off at 9 a.m. with 84 matches scheduled.

LPC manager Alex Tobias, derby host, has the full backing of National Cockers Association (NCA) stalwart Sonny Ramos and 2007 'Mr. Big Shabikan' runner-up Boni Aguilar.

Aside from glamour and delegation, the line-up of participants include Ringo Lim, Tony Lozada, and cockpit kid Patrick Antonio.

Meanwhile, Eric and Sheila Villanueva won a second new Honda Civic in succession in LPC's Fastest Wins Derby Cock 'Chiken.' For more info, please call 913-1040, 874-8389 and 8888-1496/87.

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK
Gabby Espinas, acquired recently by Air 21 from Magnolia, connects a bar throw during Jumbo Alejag of Talk 'N Text in their game yesterday. Story on A13.

NCRAA: Doves seize eighth straight victory

THE ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI COLLEGE Doves kept their poise in the endgame and survived the charge of the Philippine School of Business Administration Jaguars, 75-72, in the 58th Inter-National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) men's basketball tournament.

The Doves fronted two crucial turnovers in the endgame, and then relied on the heroics of Cyrenne Lasmarias and Raymund Ingan to seal their eighth straight triumph at the Emilio Aguinaldo College Sports Complex.

"We solidified the Doves' grip on the side lead when they shook the Jaguars their second defeat in seven matches.

The Jaguars dropped to a share of second spot with PATTS School of Accountancy with similar 5-2 records.

After PSBA tied the count at 72-all off Ingan's jumper, the Doves found the inspired play a pair of calls. The Jaguars turned the ball over twice, enabling Lasmarias and Ingan to keep the Doves' ahead by splitting their charities, 74-73, in the last 30 seconds.

Lasmarias tallied a game-high 19 points, while Ingan chilled in 17.

Meanwhile, Grace Hinon and Angel Mendoza scored key baskets in the last two minutes to key in the EAC Generals' 70-61 victory over defending champion Arellano University.

The Generals climbed to third spot with the Asian College of Science and Technology Lighthawks with their 5-3 mark. The Chiefs are in fourth (4-3).

Mamiit's next target: Japan in Davis Cup

RETURNING FROM A WINNING stint in the Thailand Southeast Asian Games, Cecil Mamiit is now setting his sights on the Davis Cup competition and even the Olympics as he hopes to overcome his carrying the national colors internationally.

The Philippines, back in Group I of competition in the Davis Cup, takes on Asian heavyweight Japan here in Manila.

"It is our turn to play in our home court with a big local crowd cheering us on unlike in Thailand," Mamiit said. "In the same time, the weather here will be another factor as the Japanese players will be coming from cold weather."

Mamiit won the gold medal in the singles competition in the Thailand SEA Games.

Mamiit said the RP squad, managed by sportswoman-businessman Jean Henri Diwalibot, benefited from the fact that the SEA Games was held in between the Davis Cup tie-match to against Kuwait and Japan, saying "we had the opportunity to rotate and play together as a team."

"Right now I believe we have fifty-fifty chances but if we continue to work hard, we should be able to swing the odds to our favor, maybe 60-40 just before the matches," added Mamiit.

MAMIIT. Homecourt advantage

Fight is now between Salud and Ramos

IN HUDDLE

Abeth Cadiz

BETWEEN NOW and Jan. 11, the day after the PBA board reconvenes to select the next league commissioner, a lot of things can happen.

The original plan was to make the final choice last Dec. 27, the day the remaining three candidates presented to the governors their plans for the league absent their opponents.

But after about two hours of deliberation, the board still couldn't come up with a new commissioner. They went through three rounds of voting, but none of the three—which were down to two candidates in the second round—got the required minimum six votes.

To the media, "no news" is never good news, so everyone was disappointed when PBA officer in charge Jeremy Fernandez's appearance at the lobby of the PBA office to tales where the press was gathered to announce the result of the deliberations.

• • •

"Can we at least get the numbers?" asked a flabbergasted reporter on the who had come to the PBA office early, prepared with a complete rundown of the candidates' merits compared to one.

He wanted to know how many votes former Chito Salud and former Sentral president Lamberto Ramos each got.

It wasn't difficult to extrapolate though, that one got five votes, while the other got four. Because if one of them got three or less, then it means that the other got six, which is the minimum number of votes required to declare a winner.

What the rest of the members of the media wanted to know was, which league ended the tallies.

To review, the sequence of the presentation of candidates was done through a drawing of lots. It turned out to be in alphabetical order: Patrick Gregorio first, Lamberto Ramos second, and Chito Salud third.

Each got 30 minutes to make his presentation. Each left immediately after the presentation.

Lunch followed, both for the board and the media. While deliberations was next on the agenda, personally, I was convinced that the governors had already made their choices even before the candidates made their presentations.

It wasn't long after the meeting that I heard not how the teams voted. I was almost a hundred percent assurance in my speculations except for one. Its selection which was a big question mark.

Now, I'm sure you too would like to know how the teams voted.

Let's play a little game. I'll give you a clue:

Remember, one of the candidates got five votes, the other four.

The outcome of the five teams are dominated by the color red, while those of the four are multi-colored.

Had the other candidate collected five votes after the second round of voting, he would have been declared commissioner.

Because one team from the red-colored group would have shifted his vote to the candidate of the multi-colored group in the third round of voting.

If I'm not being clear to you, that's not intentional.

The big surprise was the swing vote, which was supposed by both opposing parties.

• • •

Ben Gregorio shouldn't feel too bad about losing. He emerged in the first round. I heard some governors speaking highly of his presentation.

Under the rules of the selection, the candidate with the lowest number of votes in the first round will be the first to get the boot and the executive director of the PBP was that candidate.

What might have gone against him was having two brothers in two different teams in the PBA.

Younger brother Alfonso is the coaching staff of Air21 while Ilpan is head coach of Purefoods.

Boy, am I glad God must have other plans for him.

Anyway, everyone is now wondering what step the PBA will take should the deadlock remain despite several rounds of voting on Jan. 11.

One governor said he doesn't even want to think about it, because that will spoil his Christmas.

Archers rip Eagles in match play opener, 8.5-3.5

TAGAYTAY—La Salle, 180 strong, has proven from its youth brigade, down to Division II, the first round of "De La Salle-Ateneo Match Play 2007," returning eight rabid fanbases out of the 12 matchups to seize control, 8.5-3.5, at the scheduled Tagaytay Highlands yesterday.

The archers kept the momentum of their cold start in the morning four-some matches with an equally impressive clean sweep in the afternoon, giving the battered squad a big breakthrough in the Metro Cup-style event between two institutions with a storied basketball history.

La Salle prevailed, 4-2, in the four-somes, and 4.5-1.5 in Stableford.

Mike Nie, 15, and Chester Hong continued splendidly in the four-some and Stableford matches, respectively, to seal Benjamin Garcia, 7 & 2, and repeating the finished pair of national amateur champion Anthony Fernando and Manuel Lim Chua, 2-up, on a windy day at the rough, challenging par-72 layout.

Anya Tanpinco, the 21-year-old SEA Games silver medallist, also went four-to-par, teaming up with Hyo Weong to thumping Tiu Lovelyn Valeriano-Lim Salvador pair, 5 & 4, in the six-man shootout format then linking up with Mika Moyano in edging Avi Mori and Rodgelio in the Santos ball dyad.

Alejandro, 19, also swept his first two matches for La Salle, teaming up with Katrina Gonzalez on the veteran pair of Iggy Caravello and Mari Bethencourt, 4 & 3, in the four-some.

King Sedurante-Ilarmina delivered two victories for the Archers. He partnered with Oliver Gan to humble Fernando and Joel Bernaldez, 2 & 1, in the morning match. Ilmi joined Raffy Garcia in outlasting Andrei Dizon and Jeric Hechanova, 2-up, in the afternoon.

"We were expecting a close match, especially in the four-some," said La Salle skipper Freddie Mendiola.

It was a fine start for the Archers, who are gunning for a third straight win over the Eagles after taking the last two dogfight of the event organized and hosted by Belle Corp. and Tagaytay Highlands.

Ateneo Public women champion Tammy Manrique and Oliver Gan underscored La Salle's cold start as they bounced back from one-hole down to draw level with Caravello and Mari Bethencourt after 10 holes.

The two teams resume their four-some football clash today with the Eagles veteran of the inaugural tournament in 2006, out to redeem themselves and turn the tables on their arch rivals. The singles matches will be played tomorrow.

Also winning for La Salle in the tournament were the Brent Pierce-Sammy Ilarmina, which beat Angel Tanseco and John Gobing, 3 & 2.

Miguel Paqui and Mark Bagsic steered the Ateneo, winning 4 & 3 over Ivy and Hero in the alternate shot format and 2 & 1 over Justin Liuag and Ana Tecson.

The event is backed by Solar Sports, Pinoy golf, Mizlar Belts & Bas Pawoni Cologne, and the Crimson Resort & Country Club, Ultramax Travel Corp., Quadro Printers, Point Travel, Ideal Vision Center, Bonjoco Mirror and Grosmor UPI.

After SEAG, cycling eyes '12 London Olympics

BIGGER, BRIGHTER THINGS ARE COMING. Philippine cycling's way after its impressive performance in the recent 24th Southeast Asian Games in Thailand where it bagged four gold medals.

The Philippine Sports Commission, through chairman Pelligrino Nantion, has expressed willingness to fund the cyclists' training which may lead to a shot in the 2012 London Olympics.

ESPINOZA

An Olympic slot would require a rider to compete in at least IXU (Union Cycliste Internationale) event as possible. Such races are particularly staged in Europe and a few in Australia. UCI points are earned in every race regardless of the cyclist's batch.

But before a rider can qualify for UCI event, he must first join UCI training center in Europe—specifically at the UCI World Cycling Center in Aigle, Switzerland—billed home to such cyclists as Spain.

Malcolm and Indonesia, which won four gold medals out of the 11 offered in track, were their cohort in Australia and Switzerland.

Cycling emerged as the second most successful national sports association after winning which produced eight gold medals.

Joey Rasico bagged the country's first gold in mountain bike's men's downhill. Also winning event Victor Fuentes in men's points race, Milo Catalan in men's individual pursuit of track and Marlon Bobis in the women's mountain bike cross-country.

The planned preparation would be focused on the Asian championships, World Cup, World Championships and eventually, the 2012 Olympics.

The PSC will also establish the velodrome at the Aquatic Sports Complex in Clarkton City. Only three other SEA countries have velodromes—Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

Orillana fuels Dolphins

GAME LEDGER! (Ateneo Women's Volleyball)
1 p.m.—Letrán vs. ...
1 p.m.—Ateneo vs. ... (Game 2)

By Mac Anthony Reyes

ACE PITCHER JOSEPH ORILLANA spun a three-hitter to enjoy Cebu with 6-3 triumph over Manila yesterday that moved the Dolphins to within a win of clinching the Baseball Philippines Series 2 championship at the Rizal Memorial ballpark.

Orillana, back from the Southeast Asian Games campaign where he was handily used as the 10th team's No. 4 pitcher, struck out five and contributed two doubles to the Dolphins' 15-hit attack against Manila's Claudio Lobarbio.

"Everything fell into place," said Jesse Barcelon in Filipino. "The opponent is very tough because of its pitcher (Lobarbio) who is the top pitcher of the national team. Joseph is just fourth in the rank but he was able to subdue."

The Dolphins, fourth players during the inauguration of Commissioner of the Pilot Series, can wrap up the title with a win on Saturday also at the same Rizal venue.

The game stood at 3-all on top of the eighth inning when the Dolphins struck for three runs after two outs to take a 6-3 lead.

Miggy Gonzales finally got to Lobarbio with a double to left that scored Joseph Posey, who had reached on an error.

Second base Emerson Milano sent Gonzales to third with another double and the Manila decided to walk Orillana and try their luck against Antonio Barcelon, who had turned to relief.

Wrong move.

The Cebu manager's son rose to the occasion, doubling home Milano and Gonzales before Jon de Ungco lifted one to end the inning.

Manila responded with two runs in the lower half of the eighth with Nino Diaz, last conference's best hitter, smashing a two-bagger after two outs to score Leory Ichua and Bernard Reja that pruned Cebu's lead to 6-5.

After Edward Lendebie was immediately walked to fill the bases, Orillana quelled the threat by striking out Irineo Maly.

CEBU Dolphins' Joseph Orillana pitches against the Manila Giants. Orillana's three-hitter pushed his team to within a win of the Baseball Philippines 2 crown.

UST spikers fan streak, cream Lady Maroons

GAME LEDGER! (Ust Espin Dust)
9 a.m.—All vs. (UST Ateneo)
11 a.m.—ADMU vs. (All Ateneo)
2 p.m.—UST vs. (UP Ateneo)
4 p.m.—FEU vs. (UE Ateneo)

UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS' Tiger cubs extended its lead to the eight mark after beating University of the Philippines, 25-19, 25-18, 25-19, yesterday for its fourth straight win in the UAAP women's volleyball tournament at the Blue Eagle Gym.

Reigning Most Valuable Player Grace Bernal and Mary Jean Balse had a combined output of 31 points as the unbeaten Tigresses retained the Unconquered lead.

Bernal poured 16 of her game-high 20 points from attacks while Balse added 11.

"It's a good win going into our break," said UST coach Angiel Shi Marta, referring to the three-week Christmas break. "I'm glad Balse and Bernal stepped up because one of our key players, Angeli Tabuquero, has fever."

In the other game, Ateneo notched its second straight win at the expense of University of the East, 25-23, 24-26, 25-18, 25-16.

The Lady Eagles improved to 2-1 while the lost skipt, like the Lady Maroons, have yet to win in four matches.

Rookie Kiesa Acevedo made all her 10 points off attack while Patti Tagaytay added 12. Chesa Soriano, the league's leading scorer, backs-down court but still came up with 17 markers.

Ateneo had a sluggish second frame with only Acevedo, Balsamo and Patti Tagaytay working double team to thwart UE in no avail.

The Red Spikers were led by Kat Reeves who finished with 10 points while Joy Tan chipped in seven markers.

Women's volleyball action resumes on Jan. 9.

Gomez bags S'woods tilt via net 62

JAVIER GOMEZ BREACHED THE scoring limit of 63 strokes just 62 in winning the second and title event in Davao Sunrisers discovered why he's the dark horse pick by taking the low gross plum in the recent Quintessa's Cup of the Manila Southwood Golf and Country Club.

Gomez, a 10-handicapper plying in Senior Group 2, fired a gross of 81 for a net 61 but competition rules peg the limit below par at 62. Sunrisers carded a 70 to beat Edmund Ilio by two shots for the low gross trophy of the tourney honoring MGCC chairman of the board Ruben John Quiroprua.

He settled for the Class A crown, leaving Raphael Anan and Ilio Bang-Chad by ones.

Jose Coronado, Jed Ramos, Nicholas Takayama, Roland dela Cruz, Eric Hee Suk, Terence San Juan, Ray Gomez and Joe Pasaol, Jr. grabbed the other titles at stake.

Geronimo turned a 67 to win the Class B crown, Ramos's 68 won him Class C, Takayama won the Class D crown and dela Cruz (66) captured Class E. Suk (69) and San Juan (62) took the ladies Group 1 and Group 2, respectively, while Orozco and Fuentino were the senior champions.

Camp John Hay Manor Golf Club, Free Stain Mobile, Inc., Holcim Hunger Lia, Solidcem Corp., Golfcore, Manila Jockey Master, Hi-golf, Southwoods Manor, MRT and Manfred Security backed the event as major sponsors.

WOODS: Having dramatic

Tiger keeps his spectacular shots to a minimum, but goes on winning

THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA—The spectacular of Tiger Woods in shades are seen aspect of his game, it's his work ethic.

The winner of 13 majors has a difficult shot that nobody can make look easy. Perhaps his most impressive round of golf was on the Saturday in the US Open when he hit the first 17 greens in regulation at Oakmont and had to settle for a 68.

And there is no denying the results.

Woods again clinched the competition this year with seven US PGA Tour victories, his 55th career title, adjusting the opening playoff event and still taking the division out of the new FedEx Cup, and collecting two more Target Golf Championships to make him 14-4-0 against the world's best.

But when was the spectacular shot that defines a special year?

One reaches to sum up a season is to ask the reader "Tiger" for the shot that most people remember about their victory and a shot that might get overlooked but was meaningful to them.

Two years ago, it was Woods' chip-in for birdie on the 16th hole at the Masters, which made a 12-team and hung on the lip before falling. Last year was a 4-iron he holed out for eagle on the 14th hole at Royal Liverpool.

What will people remember about his victory this year in the US PGA Championship?

Record mixed

"Hmmm," Woods said, contemplating almost long enough to give a guess.

He smiled on a shot he missed, a 15-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole of the second round at Southern Hills that spun 270 degrees out of the cup and forced him to settle for a 69, tying a major championship record.

"If you think about it, I had a chance to break a record," he said. "Otherwise, I didn't do anything that could've done that record out, except to be consistent. But I think that's the nature of the season how hard to think."

As for the best shot, Woods didn't hesitate.

"The drive on 16," he said. "I just balanced."

Woods' lead was as large as five in the first round, but it was down to one over Woody Austin—until he birdied the 15th hole. That came the tightest drive of the day, leaving him a short iron to the green. He two-putted from there for birdie.

Also winning for La Salle in the tournament were the Brent Pierce-Sammy Ilarmina, which beat Angel Tanseco and John Gobing, 3 & 2.

Miguel Paqui and Mark Bagsic steered the Ateneo, winning 4 & 3 over Ivy and Hero in the alternate shot format and 2 & 1 over Justin Liuag and Ana Tecson.

The event is backed by Solar Sports, Pinoy golf, Mizlar Belts & Bas Pawoni Cologne, and the Crimson Resort & Country Club, Ultramax Travel Corp., Quadro Printers, Point Travel, Ideal Vision Center, Bonjoco Mirror and Grosmor UPI.

SPORTS

CHICAGO Bulls guard Kirk Hinrich (right) beats Los Angeles Lakers forward Lamar Odom to the loose ball. Odom and the Lakers, however, beat the Bulls at the United Center

Lakers rip Bulls; Kings triumph

CHICAGO—THE LOS ANGELES LAKERS PUT ON A strong team performance to register a 103-93 road win over the Chicago Bulls on Tuesday, the visitors getting double-digit tallies from six players.

With Kobe Bryant struggling through a 7-for-19 shooting night while playing with a troublesome groin, Sasha Vujacic came off the bench to score 19 points and lead a balanced attack.

"People call us a one-man (Bryant) team and we don't care as long as we're winning ballgames," Lakers forward Luke Walton told reporters.

"If we start losing, then we'll get mad and we'll get up to us to shoot it."

Bryant finished with 14 points, Lamar Odom had 17 points and 10 rebounds and Andrew Bynum also had a double-double, with 11 points and 10 rebounds to go along with four blocks.

"As eye-popping as Kobe's numbers are, the reason they have the record they do (3-0) is because all the other guys are playing well," Walton said.

Luol Deng had 26 points and seven rebounds and Kirk Hinrich 17 points, eight assists and five rebounds for the Bulls, who were talking to the Lakers about acquiring Bryant before the start of the season.

In San Antonio, New Jersey John Salmons scored a career-high 31 points and passed for a career-high 11 assists as the Sacramento Kings won the Mon, 106-101.

The Kings got their second road win of the season—and second in five days.

New Jersey has lost six of its past seven games and couple of four home. Sean Williams had eight blocked shots, tying a team rookie record set in 1981 by Mike Gminski.

In Los Angeles, Chris Bosh scored 11 of his 24 points in the third quarter to help the Toronto Raptors take the lead for good and down the Clippers, 89-77.

Bosh also had nine rebounds to become the Raptors' career leader. He 2,947 bettors Antonio Davis' mark of 2,939.

Meanwhile, in Miami, Shaquille O'Neal won his personal and his team's struggles as just another loss.

His 14.5 points-per-game average is by far the lowest of his career. His Miami Heat are 7-17, one of the worst records in the NBA, and look nothing like the team that won a championship 18 months ago. His big hurts, his pains when and he knows that, at 35 years old, many believe he's finished.

Shaq keeps the faith

Not surprisingly, O'Neal, a four-time NBA champion, begs to differ.

He still believes in the Heat and, perhaps most important, he still believes in himself.

"Do I feel cursed? Yeah," O'Neal said on Tuesday. "I'll either pass or fail. That's why they call it a test."

O'Neal had 10 points and eight rebounds on Monday in Miami's 91-87 win over the workgroup Minnesota Timberwolves, a game in which the Heat had to dig deep in the final minutes to prevail at home over the 10th worst road team.

Nowhere wise, even though he looked old, it was among his better games this season. But for assessment?

"Terrible," O'Neal said.

He scoffs at the notion that his days as a dominant big man are done. Sure, he's not an MVP candidate any more, and Dwyane Wade—not O'Neal—has been Miami's most vital scoring option in recent seasons. But he's almost defiant in his insistence that if given more shots, he would be more effective.

O'Neal is averaging 10 shot attempts per game. Asked how many he wants, he wouldn't give a specific number.

"More than 10, so I can get into the game," O'Neal said. "My son said: even get into a game with seven shots."

Heat coach Pat Riley has resisted changing the Heat offense, philosophy and will considers O'Neal an extremely important part of the attack, even as the numbers decline.

The thinking there is simple—he still believes in O'Neal.

"You know who Shaq is," Riley said. "He's an affable guy. He wants to participate. I mean, he was a great scorer, unstoppable. All those things. But as he gets a little bit older and things slow down, he will come be very effective." AP, Reuters

O'NEAL (120 below)

Kobe finally cured of 'Chicago Fever'

CHICAGO—KOBE BRYANT sought "Chicago Fever" in Chicago.

He seemed to be cured of the affliction by Tuesday night, his first appearance at the United Center since his controversial bid to oust the Lakers into trading him.

When the trade didn't happen, when the Bulls and Lakers wouldn't work out a deal during training camp, Bryant put on his purple-and-gold uniform and remembered why.

Four days the team was completing a multi-player trade was open to debate; however.

Chicago GM John Paxson said in early November that it was never close to happening, contradicting rumors to the contrary.

Bryant has been loathe to rehash the events of the offseason, when he asked to be traded, or the early days of training camp, when team owner Jerry Buss said the Lakers would consider offers for the superstar guard.

Asked Tuesday if he was pleased by the way things worked out for him and the Lakers, Bryant repeated his 2007 Oh mantra.

BRYANT

"I'm having a great time," he said.

When someone wondered what it was that attracted him to Chicago in the first place, Bryant joked, "Pizza. Deep-dish pizza."

Bryant also said he had no interest in holding out and forcing the Lakers to trade him.

"I just love playing so much," he said. "My teammates, we've like brothers. We all get along extremely well, so it would be very unfair to them to do something like that."

It was the opinion of Lakers coach Phil Jackson that Bryant had "Chicago Fever" during training camp, for that it ended once the regular season began Oct. 30. Jackson said he hasn't seen any signs of it since opening tip-off.

Jackson said playing in Chicago might ignite some old feelings for Bryant.

"There will be some emotions about it," Jackson said. "I'm not sure how it's going to go. I'm sure he wanted to do well. He actually had a desire to be here and tried to fulfill that. It was an awful long shot from the beginning."

JEFF Silver, for wire

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Ayala Land joins John Hay consortium

Entry resurrects beleaguered Baguio leisure project

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—THE Ayalas are the new partners of PH Estates-owned Camp John Hay Development Corp. (CJHDevcor), which has been fighting to sustain its leisure estate project here since 1996.

Officials of John Hay Management Corp. (JHMC) confirmed that Ayala has joined the John Hay consortium, promising to put at least P2.3 billion into it by 2009.

A formal announcement of the new venture is expected this month.

The CJHDevcor officials bagged off from discussing Ayala's participation in talks this.

"We have to wait for the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) to review the renegotiated contracts between CJHDevcor and the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) before we can announce the new agreements," a CJHDevcor executive said.

But sources from both CJHDevcor and the JHMC, who asked not to be identified because they were not authorized to speak on the project, said Ayala's entry has resurrected the beleaguered John Hay project.

Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) is coming in as a joint-venture partner for a still undisclosed CJHDevcor property, which would host a business outsourcing facility.

Ayala is also taking over the CJHDevcor's international charter project and will build a strip mall, the sources said.

A CJHDevcor official said joint companies PH Estate Urban and PH Estate Land would pour in fresh capital to complete the construction of the 300-room John Hay Suites, as well as leisure cottages already programmed for 2008.

"The JHMC source said Ayala originally offered to cover for all of CJHDevcor's liabilities.

"The money would have been injected upfront to JHMC, so that the government can have access to its share immediately, but I have no idea

FULL STORY

Currencies

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

Stocks end lower

SHARE PRICES LOSE GROUND FOR THE SECOND straight session yesterday, despite a positive overnight performance by Wall Street, dealers said.

The composite index finished down 3.93 points, or 1.46%, at 265.28 points. The broader all-share index lost 0.82 point, or 0.31%, to end at 265.88.

Value turnover was 1.1 billion shares worth P3.5 billion.

"Investors paid second attention," said Lawrence de Leon of Accord Capital Equities. "They are still jittery about the volatility in global financial markets, and their 30-day% incentive) still was not enough to convince them to buy up more shares."

FULL STORY

PSALM postpones sale of power assets to 2008

By Abigail L. Ho

POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND LIABILITIES Management Corp. has finally made a formal announcement that it will move the bidding for the 193.5-megawatt (MW) Bulalo geothermal and 140.5-MW Tiwi geothermal power plant package to next year.

The government agency said in a statement that it hoped to bid out the power plant package within the first quarter.

PSALM said it was still in discussions with PNOC Energy Development Corp. regarding possible amendments to the steam supply agreements now entered to as the geothermal resource supply contract (GSAC), that would be attached to the plant.

The DOE would ensure the winning bidder for the plant of steam supply.

The long-term GSAC will take into consideration some issues that the Joint Congressional Power Commission had noted.

"PSALM told me this opportunity to address comments of investor groups on the GSAC, thus enhancing the value of the plant package," PSALM said in its statement.

In an earlier interview, PSALM vice president for asset management and electricity trading Emilia Tampinco said PSALM had

FULL STORY

IN THIS ISSUE

Oriental Peninsula stocks up 19% on listing debut /B2
SSS net income surged to P16.17B as of Sept. /B7

Privatization seen to yield ₱30B next year

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO GO [illegible] privatization and [illegible] revenue-generation efforts on tax collection, which has been remain this year [illegible] because of collecting agencies' inefficiency.

"We are programming less privatization revenues. We want to make sure that the tax effort will improve next year," Finance Secretary Margarito Teves told reporters.

The Department of Finance set a target of raising P38 billion from privatization

FULL STORY

Killer bill

EVERYBODY SEEMS TO BE against the move in the House of Representatives to amend the Epira, and yes, this lovable group of congressmen insists on doing it.

Why? Do they think that they know better than the rest of us? Possible, but is it also possible there are hundreds of millions of dollars involved in each case?

Anyway, the House energy committee led by the son of the Lola at the Palace, Rep. Mikey Arroyo, recently unleashed a resolution to mangle the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, or the Epira, after conducting only three hearings, which were called on short notice.

In effect, the magnificent House energy committee wanted to lower the threshold of privatization of Napocor power generating assets from 70 percent (in the original Epira) to only 50 percent.

Our beloved Napocor, which enjoys the distinction of having hurled the entire nation in billions of dollars of indebtedness, still controls more than 60 percent of the power generating assets of this country.

After all, the Philippines can only boast of having the second highest electricity rates in the whole of Asia.

***

Epira specifies five conditions to begin the so-called open access system in the power sector, which is similar to the free trading mode in the stock exchanges.

Darren relates ... the only answer condition is the privatization of at least 70 percent of the power generating assets of Napocor.

And it's not as if the sale of those assets is tactics as. No, your humanoids can, on the contrary!

For instance, Jose Ibarra, president of the Asset Privatization Trust and Liabilities Management

BREAKTIME

Comrades R. Bernal III

(PALLAS), just announced that the government was now ready to pay ... the MANNERS ... some $1 billion of its foreign debts as a result of the successful sale of Napocor's power plants.

Now, you tell me one month on our earnings is interest payments on those debts!

***

Recently, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines Inc. (JCCIP) was added to the long list of groups against the Epira amendments.

But who are they, right? The Japanese are only the biggest foreign investors to the country, accounting for more than 60 percent of the total foreign investments here.

The JCCIP position is that Napocor's virtual control of the power sector will only worsen the problem of high electricity rates.

Thus the Japanese businessmen urged the Lower House to reject the Lala at the Epira, instead of amending it.

***

How is what JCCIP president Toshifumi Inami said in a letter to the Lala last Dec. 14:

"We believe that amending Epira in some would reverse the gains of your power reforms thus far and endanger investment confidence.

"Instead, we encourage the government to be steadfast with full and proper implementation of Epira to achieve its primary objectives of providing a competitive and vibrant electricity industry that can play its role in making the Philippines competitive."

***

Following are the other groups against the amendments:

Philippine Independent Power Producers Association; the Semiconductors and Electronics Industry of the Philippines Inc. (Seipi); the Philippine Independent Power Producers Association Inc. (Pippa); the Philippine-American Power Consortium; the Joint Foreign Chambers (Joint Foreign Chambers (JFC)—which is made up of American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc.; American-Filipino Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc.; Canadian Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc.; European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc.; Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry of the Philippines Inc.; Australian Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc.; and the Philippine Association of Multinational Companies Regional Headquarters Inc.

Look...all those people put their money where their mouths were, obviously invested heavily in this country.

And so why is that lovable group of congressmen, led by the presidential son, insisting on doing the exact opposite?

Don't tell me they are deaf!

***

Rep. Nelda Garcia (Cebu) is still trying to solve the memory of another bill called "Dengvaxia Medicines Bill."

Under the existing Intellectual Property Code (IPC), the government can only impose during a "state of national emergency." Garcia's bill now removed the need for such a provision. The mysterious requirement only makes it hard for the government to import cheaper drugs.

***

Nelson on more, clear on, because for once the private sector will benefit the multinational drug companies.

As Garcia noted, the government's drug importation will always require that Malacañang should first declare a state of national emergency.

That does not happen every day.

"In Garcia, another 'objectionable feature' of the bill is the creation of what he called a "bureaucratic super body" (referred name "Drug Price Regulatory Board"), which is not found in the Senate version.

Garcia said, if this super body has the absolute power to fix the retail prices of drugs and medicines, including the importation of drugs, there is no need for the other agencies at all.

In other words, the "super-body" can impose its pricing on the free market, right?

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CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

NOTICE OF HEARING

Sagittarius puts up butterfly sanctuary

By Amy R. Barna

SAGITTARIUS MINES INC. HAS proven that mining operations and conservation of the environment can go hand in hand.

Gil, which runs gold and copper mining in Tampakan, South Cotabato, has opened a sensation and butterfly garden in the lobby of the main office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Quezon City.

"The opening of this sensation and butterfly garden would show visitors of the DENR a concrete example of how mining companies protect and even sustain the environment while they're there on very small engaged to digging for minerals in their host communities," said Environment Secretary Lito Atienza.

Atienza added that while the government was making an all-out effort to create a strong and healthy mining industry, it was also making sure that the environment would be well taken care of.

"Mining activities and caring for the environment are complementing the programs of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. This is also the direction that the DENR is trying to follow," he said.

Under the revitalized mining industry program, the DENR requires mining companies to implement extensive environmental programs even during the pre-feasibility phase of operations in order to ensure the protection of the environment and biodiversity.

SMI's consortium, which is co-

loan to DENR. Asiaeco aids investors and millipedes from Tampakan.

Some of the species of the wildlife are being bred by SMI as part of the mining firm's effort to preserve biodiversity in the forest habitat.

Atienza said what was signified that about SMI's butterfly and insect breeding project was that it can closely coexist with and also provide alternative livelihood to community members.

During its pre-feasibility stage, Sagittarius has already been providing annual community development assistance to Tampakan's host communities in South Cotabato.

Funds have been used in employment various education, community health, livelihood, small infrastructure and capability building programs.

For instance, while the Tiboli in Tampakan used to be the most marginalized indigenous group in the region, all of the Tiboli children are now going to school.

Three children would be supported until they complete their college education.

Through Sagittarius' education assistance program, more than 8,000 scholars have so far been sent to school.

The elder population are also benefiting through Sagittarius' adult literacy program.

Roughly P9 million is spent yearly for these programs, as well as for schoolhouse infrastructure and teachers' salaries.

Stocks end lower

From page B1

Analysts said a move by major central banks to pump more money into the financial system amid a debilitating credit crunch had given investors fresh cheer.

"While the intention is to stimulate the faltering US economy, these moves also acknowledge a much bigger problem...to what extent is not known—and that requires little confidence," said Jesus Francis of AB Capital Securities.

Mall operator SM Prime Holdings Inc. dropped 50 centavos to P38.

Property developer Ayala Land Inc. slipped 25 centavos to P11. Homebuilder Megaworld Corp. lost five centavos to P3.75. Conglomerate Ayala Corp. fell 95 to P496.

Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., the country's biggest bank by assets, advanced 50 centavos to P50. Banco de Oro-EPCI, the second biggest bank, added 50 centavos to P56.

Index leader Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. closed flat at P3,000.

San Miguel Corp. saw its 'B' shares rise 50 centavos to P90.50 while its 'B' shares were unchanged at P88.50. AFP

Bangko Sentral sees 'hot money,' FDI inflows doubling next year

Robust economic growth to lure investors into doing business in RP

By Michelle V. Rosco

EUWELMIDO

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas expects foreign direct and portfolio investments inflows to more than double next year in view of the economy's robust growth.

From this year's projected $3.1 billion in net foreign investments, the BSP said net inflows next year could be as much $6.9 billion next year.

Net foreign investments are computed by subtracting total outflows from total inflows.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said investors that of the projected net foreign investments for next year, $3.45 billion would be in the form of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows. The balance of $3.2 billion will come in the form of portfolio investments or "hot money."

For this year, the BSP is expecting that investments outflows would be $1.2 billion bigger than the FDI inflows. This, according to Guinigundo, can be attributed to the substantial investments made by a number of companies overseas.

Earlier, the government economic team said the higher than expected growth of the economy would entice investors to put up businesses in the country next year.

The economy announced in terms of gross domestic product, grew by 7.1 percent in the first three quarters that rose from year-ago level. The boosted optimism that the government's GDP growth target for this year of between 6.1 and 6.7 percent would be surpassed.

The National Economic and Development Authority has projected that the economy would grow by at least 7 percent in 2007.

Annual growth in the first three quarters, which beat most forecasts, was attributed to the increase in government spending and personal consumption. The government said it was increasing its spending on infrastructure to be on par with the spending levels in neighboring countries and to respond to complaints of businesses over poor infrastructure.

Economic managers said the government's ability to put its fiscal house in order helps the decline in interest rates which encouraged gradual growth in bank loans for investment-related activities.

The portfolio investments of $3.2 billion seen for next year, however, will be lower than the estimated $4.3 billion in last month's this year.

The projected drop in portfolio investments was due to the risk investors by portfolio investors as a carry-over impact of the US subprime market crisis.

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PLDT, 13 others sign deal on disaster recovery support

By Rita T. Olchondra

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE TELEphone Co. and 13 other major carriers in the Asia Pacific region are pooling their resources to ensure quick restoration of services in the event of major cable system failures.

Three firms, belonging to the Pacific Partners—the alliance of major carriers in the region, have signed a memorandum of agreement for the establishment of a mutual disaster recovery support.

Members of the group include AT&T of the United States, China Telecom, CAT Telecom of Thailand, Chunghwa Telecom of Taiwan, KDDI of Japan, Reliance Telecom, Indotot of Indonesia, REACH of Hong Kong and Australia, Singapore Telecom, Telecom New Zealand, Telekom Malaysia, VNPT of Vietnam and VSNL International of India and Canada.

They agreed to pool their manpower, talent, facilities and other resources to assist each multiple cable failures such as what occurred after the Taiwan earthquake of December 2006.

Apart from ensuring network support, PLDT is evolving its network in direct-to-home transmission that will enable users to mobile TV offering, company chief Manuel Pangilinan said in an interview.

"We will move in feasibility early next year because everything, such as the prices of equipment and set-up boxes, have gone down significantly in the past few years," Pangilinan said.

Interest rate decline boosts insurance sales

THE LOW INTEREST RATE ENVIRONMENT has pushed up local insurance interest in life insurance products linked to equity-based funds.

Pru Life UK, the Philippine unit of British financial giant Prudential Plc, that pioneered in variable or unit-linked life insurance in the country, yesterday reported P1 billion worth of placements in its Global Equity Fund only six month after its launch.

Belle Tiongco, Pru Life UK vice president, said public interest in equity-based variable life product was phenomenal especially because investors were looking for better yielding investment products as opposed to regular savings in banks.

Pru Link Equity Fund, composed of 100 greatest price equities, seeks to optimize medium- to long-term capital growth through investments in shares of stocks listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange.

"We're optimistic about the market next year. We realize our strength is in the unit-linked category," Tiongco said.

A unit-linked insurance policy provides a client a life insurance coverage with the premium paid invested in either debt or equity products or a combination of the two. [Doris G. Bonifacio]

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2. He then receives 2 text messages, a copy of his order and another, a text asking for the confirmation of his order.
3. Upon confirming his order via a text message, the order is then automatically uploaded and processed through a user interface on your computer.

LUTHA PIZZA, a home-grown pizza franchisor, was the first business to test and implement the system. Owner Teresita Ngan Tiaa is enthusiastic about the results. "It worked wonders for my business. The old system was very tedious here packaging managed ang processing of recording my orders. There were also errors in taking down orders thus resulting in wrong deliveries. Now, there's no manual time, which means no missed sales plus more fun transactions." She also adds "All I needed were SIM cards and a computer. With the new system, mobile ang operations kasi lahat automatic. Sa IOS, sales recording has become error-free. On-time and accurate pa ang delivery ng stocks namin sa franchisees."

The system comes with other helpful features:

Inventory Management:
- Product Maintenance – allows you to update the products available in the system. You may view, add and delete the products in this section.
- Inventory Maintenance – displays inventory status including Beginning Balance, Quantity on Hand, Price, Reorder Level, and Critical Level.

Text Broadcast
- Enables you to send a text message to all your franchisees or branches.
- Includes Phonebook and Message Sending Form.

Reports Module
Shows the list of reports that can be accessed by the main office, which can be exported to Excel or PDF. These reports include:
- Franchise Applications in All Stages
- Approved Franchise Applications
- Franchise Applications Approved in Number of Days
- Order Details
- Orders for the Period
- Orders per Category
- Top Ordered per Category
- Summary Report for the Month
- List of SME Product Codes

So if you're a mall-site company or an organization with franchisees, outsourcers, and warehouses with backend ordering operations, just call the Globe Hotline at 730-1200 for more information.

State firms remit ₱32.5B to gov't

Bangko Sentral, PNOC biggest contributors of dividends

By Michelle V. Remo

STATE-OWNED FIRMS REMITTED P32.48 billion in dividends and guarantee-fee payments to the national government in the first 11 months of the year.

The amount was 78 percent higher than the P18.31 billion contributed by state firms to the national coffers in the entire period last year.

Finance Undersecretary Jeremias Paul Jr., who is in charge of monitoring the financial performance of state-owned firms, said the increase was attributed to the unconsolidated collection of dividends and fees from government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs) and government financial institutions (GFIs).

The biggest dividend contributions came from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, P12.5 billion; Philippine National Oil Co., P2.2 billion; Philippine Ports Authority, P1.27 billion; and Land Bank of the Philippines, P1 billion.

The shares of most state-owned firms require them to remit at least 50 percent of their income to the national government as dividends.

Paul said the Department of Finance had stepped up efforts to collect dividends from state-owned firms as a way to instill financial discipline in them. GOCCs and GFIs were asked to help the national government achieve its goal of having zero budget deficit in 2008.

Paul said that based on the 2007 fiscal program, the government already exceeded its full-year dividends collection target. He said the government set the target for the year at only P30 billion.

In the previous years, Paul said many GOCCs were not remitting dividends to the national government. These firms only started remitting dividends when the government started adopting a tougher stance on this.

To boost efforts to instill financial discipline among state-owned firms, Paul said, the government will come up with "performance contracts" for GOCCs and GFIs. He said the first batch of contracts would be out before the end of the year.

A performance contract, whose contents will vary from one organization to another, will indicate a state-owned firm's objectives, especially income targets and those involving service delivery.

The amounts collected from GOCCs and GFIs, along with the earnings generated from the privatization of state assets, helped boost the government's revenue for the year.

In January to November, the government raised P66 billion from the privatization program.

Among the major state-owned assets sold were the government's 80-percent stake in PNOC Energy Development Corp., 46-percent stake in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp., the old facility property and minority stake in Philippine National Bank.

With the privatization proceeds and the dividends contributions, the government was able to post P52.8 billion in budget surplus in the first 11 months of the year.

This gave the government a chance to post a balanced budget this year, or one year ahead of the target.

The government originally set a budget deficit ceiling of P83 billion this year.

Food traders report higher sales to M. East

By Ronnel N. Domingo

LOCAL FOOD EXPORTERS, mostly small- and medium-scale, earned some P340 million or $5.54 million from this year's Middle East roadshow, growing by 20 percent from year-ago level.

According to the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, which organized the roadshow, the firms took part in five of the seven-member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the Middle East and which targeted the more established markets of the Unglassed Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates.

These companies included RTE/heat-and-eat chips and cookies; Fisher Farms (processed milkfish); Pharmer Steak Corp. (frozen preserves, processed marine products, noodles, frozen fruits and vegetables, coconut products); D' Farmers Philippines (canned and bottled buko/nata); Q-Phil Products International (noodles, bottled sweet preserves); and SFM Corp. (tuna-based mixes, buko-tuna, pasit noodles, flavored drinks, tea-cream, preserved meat).

Dubbed FOOD Roadshow to the Middle East, the mission also resulted in 132 trade inquiries from entities known across the region.

Client-said representatives of the firms were also able to talk with authorities from food-governing bodies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE on relevant rules that would ensure penetration of the largest markets in the Middle East.

Given said food exporters that wanted to tap the Middle Eastern markets should familiarize themselves with industry regulations, particularly on matters related to labeling, packaging and inclusion of halal-ingredients.

SAMANGANI: Isabelo receives GSK tablets to cure lymphatic filariasis

Drug firm joins campaign vs LF

By Tita Arvisu-Dantes

IN 10 OF THE 76 PROVINCES in the country there are 10 million people suffering from swollen, disfigured limbs and genitals caused by lymphatic filariasis, according to the Department of Health.

They tend to isolate themselves—unable to go to school or find work...because they are ashamed of how they look like and are picked on by people ignorant of their disease. What's more, they lose the dirt of permanent damage to their kidneys and lymphatic system because of the filariae.

Debilitating disease

Lymphatic filariasis, or LF, is a disabling and disfiguring parasitic disease caused by thread-like filarial worms that live and breed in the human lymphatic system. The worms once there live four to six years, causing the blockage of vessels that leads to swollen limbs and genitals.

The worms are transmitted by mosquitoes usually found in areas with abaca and banana plantations.

LF has been identified as a major global health problem since 1997, and is considered the second leading cause of long-term disability in the Philippines, after mental disease.

But LF can be stopped in its tracks and pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline is committed to help the DOH meet its goal of eliminating LF in the Philippines by 2020.

LF primarily affects the rural poor, with about four of five of those afflicted living in fourteen GSK-close municipalities across the Philippines, mostly in Mindanao.

The DOH reports that some 650,000 Filipinos in Northern Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Bicol, Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Western Mindanao, Northern Mindanao, Southern Mindanao, Caraga Region of Mindanao, Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Cordillera Administrative Region and Caraga are afflicted with the disease with 10 million more at risk.

Inadequate sanitation, stagnant water, crowding, lack of economic and bed nets in houses all contribute to the transmission of the disease.

Stepping up campaign

What the DOH is doing to eliminate LF is embark on a mass drug administration campaign, under which residents at least two years old in provinces where LF is present must take two drugs once a year for four to six straight years.

The goal is to cover at least 85 percent of residents in affected provinces for four to six years, say less than that and the medicines and the campaign to eradicate the disease will be useless.

Sounds simple in theory, but it is admittedly more difficult in practice, explained Dr. Corrie Y. Belleza-Jr., member of the Secretariat of the University of the Philippines in Manila and vice chair of the Coalition for the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (CELF) in the Philippines, which is helping the DOH halt the spread of LF.

Belleza said getting people to take the drugs for four to six years was the most challenging part of the campaign that started in 2000.

Because it takes years before the disease manifests itself after a person contracts the parasitic disease, he said residents of affected areas could not see the need to undergo treatment.

And even those who do take the drugs usually fall out after one or two years, rendering the campaign ineffective. As a result, the infection will continue to be passed on from one resident to another.

"If the residents of areas where LF is present do not take the drugs for four to six years, then the campaign will be useless. There will be no end to it," he said.

Creating awareness

But with the participation of GlaxoSmithKline in the sanitation and its commitment to provide for five out of the two drugs needed to treat LF, the province hit the country of the debilitating disease by 2020 no longer seems too far-fetched.

GSK is committed to not just provide the drug but also take part in the massive information campaign to get the residents of the 39 provinces to take the drugs to cure LF and also to convince the local government units to be part of the effort to eradicate LF in the Philippines.

GSK has already turned over 31.1 million albendazole tablets to the LF group, benefiting at least 2.9 million Filipinos, and it has committed to continue providing the drug until 2018, or until LF is officially declared eliminated.

The pharmaceutical company is optimistic that with the participation of other organizations in the viral campaign, the Philippines will win the battle against the spread of LF.

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Oriental Peninsula stocks up 19% on listing debut

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

ORIENTAL PENINSULA RESOURCES Group Inc., the first mining firm to go public after 24 years, yesterday closed 19 percent higher on its maiden trading day to P5.28.

Oriental Peninsula opened trading at P5.13, compared with its offer price of P2.600 a share.

"Investors who were earlier wary about the company closing its IPO [initial public offer period for] last week[due to a string of legal cases started picking it up today. At 7 times 2008 earnings, it is relatively cheap compared to other IPOs that were doing 13 to 15 times 2008 earnings," said Joseph Soriso, president at Eagle Equities Inc.

"I guess it was the potential of good mining projects coupled with its relatively small and manageable float size that created a successful debut," added Francisco Liboro, president at DCG Securities.

Oriental Peninsula president and chief executive Caroline Sanchez said yesterday that pending cases involving the company's mining claims in Palawan would not deter the company from pushing through with operating its nickel mine by the first half of 2008.

"We have all the permits to push through [with the operation of the nickel resources in Palawan]," she said.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, Oriental Peninsula said Branch 56 of the Makati Regional Trial Court had denied an application for a temporary restraining order filed by Platinum Group Metals Corp. chair Hanson Arayde that would have stopped the Philippine Stock Exchange from allowing Oriental to conduct its public offer last week and listing yesterday.

Oriental Peninsula also won a case at the Makati RTC Branch 148, which granted it a 17-day temporary restraining order stopping Platinum Group from causing the publication of paid advertisement that would illegally obstruct the IPO of Oriental Peninsula.

However, Branch 40 of the Palawan Regional Trial Court slapped a 72-hour temporary restraining order dated Dec. 10 against Oriental Peninsula and its subsidiary, Citinickel Mines and Development Corp., to stop quarrying operations in Sofronio Espanola, Palawan, and to cease from constructing a mining road within and outside the area.

The complaint was filed by a certain Mark Benedicto Concepcion, but details of the complaint were not available as of press time.

Sanchez said Oriental Peninsula may partner with a foreign firm to put up a smelting plant in Palawan to produce pure nickel in three years time.

The company or its foreign partners intend to spend roughly $300 million for the smelting plant project. Foreign groups from India, China and Australia have expressed interest in partnering with Oriental for the venture.

Pure nickel sells in the international market for $26,000 to $28,000 a ton compared with nickel ore at $55 to $100 a ton.

Legal cases fail to dampen investor interest

Ayala Land joins...

From page B1

how that arrangement was finally set to the structure," the source said.

The BMC official sought anonymity because he was not authorized by the BCDA to discuss the issue. John Hay contracts. But he said the new deals would still need city government endorsement.

BCDA chair Narciso Abaya announced last week that BCDA would sign a new partnership scheme with CitiDevco by year's end.

Both CitiDevco and BCDA had gone to court to settle a dispute involving the firm's then-controlling stake. PD Reader chair Robert John Sobrepeña suspended payments in retaliation for a Supreme Court ruling that invalidated the tax incentives enjoyed by Camp John Hay businesses.

Like Pangilinan, BMC board chairman said the dispute had already been addressed when President Macapagal-Arroyo signed RA 9700, which amended the BCDA law (RA 7227) by removing John Hay's fiscal incentives.

This development also eased the tension between BCDA and the Baguio government because it had unplugged its only connection to power from the Baguio economic zone.

Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr. said he had demanded that CitiDevco remit payments of its lease rent to the Baguio treasury.

Pangilinan said BMC also assured the city government that it would continue to receive a 20 percent share from John Hay's rent proceeds, as prescribed by 16 conditions which the city government set as a prerequisite before it endorsed John Hay's privatization in 1994.

SM Prime eyes P4B in loans in 2008

SM PRIME HOLDINGS INC., the mall development arm of tycoon Henry Sy Sr., is looking at borrowing roughly P4 billion next year to partly fund the construction of new malls.

SM Prime executive vice president Jeffrey Lim said SM Prime was looking at possible peso borrowings to finance its P6-billion capital expenditure program next year.

SM Prime is spending P6 billion for new malls and the expansion of existing malls in 2008. The new malls will be located in Bacolod, Pangasinan (25,000 sq. m.), Batangas, Bulacan (60,000 sq. m.) and Marikina (130,000 sq.m.). SM Megamall in Pasig City will be expanded as well as SM Fairview in Quezon City.

SM Prime said it will have a total of 53 malls by 2008.

SM Investments Corp. (SMIC), SM Prime's parent firm, meanwhile said it was also studying possible borrowings to partly fund its P125-billion capital expenditure program next year. SMIC executive vice president Jose Sio said.

Sio said that about 40 percent of the total capital spending next year may be funded possibly through debt. Bulk of the budget for 2008 will go to property, tourism and mall development. — Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

Privatization seen to yield ...

From page B1

P100 billion, just a third of the P300 billion generated this year from the sale of state-owned assets.

The P300 billion will cover the expected revenues from the sale of the Fiscal Terminals Inc.'s property in Bataan, the government's 12-percent stake in Manila Electric Co., and real estate in Fort Bonifacio.

San Miguel Corp. (SMC), which used to be a priority in the privatization program, is not part of the targeted assets to be sold next year. Earlier estimates said the government could generate P50 billion from the sale of its 24-percent stake in the food and beverage giant.

Sale of big-ticket government assets was the saving grace for the government's fiscal condition this year, following shortfalls in tax collection. Despite the weaker performance of the Bureau of Internal Revenue in meeting its monthly collection goals, the government managed to post a P124.6-billion surplus in the first 11 months of 2007.

The government registered a record P54-billion surplus for the month of November when it sold its remaining 60-percent stake in PNOC Energy Development Corp., considered the biggest privatization deal so far as it yielded P58.5 billion in revenues.

Economists have said that the budgetary fiscal position was definitely better if deposited proceeds from privatization.They said a budget surplus resulting from privatization was not sustainable because it depended on the availability of assets to be sold. Efficient tax collection is the preferred way of raising revenues.

PSALM postpones ...

From page B1

to assess whether or not it could commit a specific bidding schedule to the prequalified bidders or just suspend the auction indefinitely.

"We probably will have to reschedule by early next year. What's critical is the steam sale agreement. Since we don't have that yet, we really have to discuss whether or not we can already put a specific schedule to it. We're looking at all our options," he explained.

He said the existing GRSC that PNOC-EDC has now submitted to the JCPC would have to be amended to adapt to an environment that had a commercially operating wholesale electricity spot market (WESM).

Instead of a supply agreement that had no take-or-pay provisions, he said there had to be a certain level of steam covered by a take-or-pay provision, so that the area steam of the Philippine plant would be assured of steady steam supply.

With a take-or-pay provision, the future owner of the Philippine plant would have to pay for a specific level of steam whether or not it is used to fuel the facility.

The steamfield operator, on the other hand, would have to provide the contracted level of steam to the plant owner.

"We won't adopt the original [steam sale agreement] since that was crafted for a non-WESM environment. The contracted steam level for that [SEA] was 75 percent. But the GRSC now, we're looking at a take-or-pay level of around 50-60 percent," he said.

The plant package was supposed to be auctioned off last Dec. 5, but PSALM decided to move the bid submission deadline to Dec. 19 as it still had to review the transaction documents for the asset package.

The Dec. 19 bidding did not push through because of the absence of a GRSC.

SSS net income surged to ₱16.17B as of Sept.

Banco de Oro expects profit of ₱7B in 2007

By Michelle V. Ramos

BANCO DE ORO UNIVERSAL BANK, THE country's second largest bank, expects its net income this year to hit P7 billion, up 16 percent from last year's P6 billion.

BDO president Antoine Yao said in a briefing yesterday that the growth would be due partly to the surge in transactions in the run-up to the holidays.

"The Christmas season is usually the strong season for banks. There are more loans and consumers pick up more activity," Yao said.

BDO, owned by tycoon Henry Sy, is the surviving entity of its merger with Equitable-PCI Bank. The merger was completed early this year.

Earlier, BDO reported a net income of P4.9 billion in the first nine months, a 9.2 percent increase from P4.7 billion recorded in the same period last year.

Yao said the outlook next year was positive and that the bank expects net income to grow even more.

Next year's income will be driven by lending, investment services and participation in the capital market.

The bank's positive outlook for next year was partly anchored on the expected increase in investments next year resulting from this year's robust economic growth.

The economy grew 7.1 percent in the first three quarters of the year from a year ago, keeping it on track to surpass the official target of 6.5 and 6.7 percent for the full year.

Consistent with the better than-expected economic growth this year, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas projected that foreign direct investments next year would rise by 122 percent to $3.6 billion.

Prior to the merger, BDO was the country's fifth largest bank while Equitable-PCI was the third largest.

This made the merger quite unusual as it is the larger bank that usually acquires the smaller one.

The merger realized the goal of Henry Sy's Old Group of Companies to be one of the leading players in the banking industry.

BDO, now considered the most aggressive in terms of engaging in mergers and acquisitions, has acquired several other smaller banks prior to its deal with Equitable PCI Bank.

Seaweed exports seen declining

By Jerry S. Bartolo

THE LOCAL SEAWEED INDUSTRY EXPECTS to lose more than P1 billion in exports due largely to the rapid appreciation of peso, according to an industry leader.

Brennan U. Dalusag, president of the Seaweed Industry Association of the Philippines, said that even if exports reach $180 million, up from last year's $146 million, the peso equivalent this year would be much less compared to last year.

In an interview, Dalusag explained that at P55-P56 to a dollar, last year's exports reached more than P9 billion, while this year, at 40-43 to a dollar, sales are likely to only reach some P7 billion.

"I am money in the seaweed factories means less money for our farmers. As it is, the shutdowns and slowdowns of factories have displaced about 100,000 farmers and workers," said Dalusag who is also chief executive officer of Cebu-based Shesbang Marketing Corp.

The Philippines is the top exporter of carrageenan to the United States and Europe, and accounts for 52 percent of the global supply.

Carrageenan is used worldwide as food additive for ham processing and dairy product manufacturing and as an industrial product ingredient for pharmaceutical and gel medicine coating and for hygiene products' base for toothpaste, he noted.

According to Dalusag firms including King Agro, Ethon Dagat, Gobesh Hayes, Philippine Carrageenan and Nutrasa and small scale seaweed businesses have already stopped operations.

"The government should make the peso more stable because the appreciation this year is very abrupt, from P54 down to P41 to a dollar," he said.

He noted that he even had to change payment schemes to arrest foreign exchange losses.

To stop the further decline in the exports of seaweed and carrageenan, Dalusag added that the government should give farmers assistance in the form of seedling, capital and seedlings.

Dalusag earlier urged the government to exempt seaweed farmers and traders from the 1 percent withholding tax on agricultural suppliers.

Other factors such as global warming and stiffer competition had also taken their toll on the industry, which is reeling from the insufficient supply of seaweeds in Iloilo Tout Tawi and Iloilo have not fully recovered from last year's typhoons.

Last year, seaweed production declined by 9 percent to 95,000 metric tons from 102,800 tonnes tons in 2006 as warmer water temperature have made it more difficult to produce seaweed.

Revenues up to P65.5B from P48.4B in 2006

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-OWNED SOCIAL SECURITY System doubled up a net income of P16.17 billion as of September this year, dwarfing the P8.07 billion it recorded in the same period last year.

SSS president Corazon dela Paz-Bernardo said in a briefing that total revenues for the first nine months amounted to P65.5 billion versus P48.4 billion as of September last year.

"These figures reflect our successful efforts to maintain the financial viability of the fund as that the SSS can continue disbursing benefits to our 27 million members," Dela Paz-Bernardo said.

The surge was attributed to the income from government securities and equities, investment property, stock dividends and loan interests.

Dela Paz-Bernardo also cited better stock market conditions and the P7.21 billion that the SSS generated from the sale of its buildings in food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.

Contribution collection against benefit payments yielded a surplus of P1.32 billion in the first nine months, while reserve funds swelled by P55.51 billion over a year ago to hit P344.31 billion.

As such, the fund's actuarial life was stretched out to 2036 because contribution collection has been exceeding benefit payments since 2005.

SSS' reserve funds has been rising since 2003, partly buoyed by the vibrant stock market.

"This is a significant improvement since in the 1999 actuarial valuation, the Social Security Fund was projected to last only until 2013," she said.

Retirement and death benefits make up 69 percent of the P44.6 billion that the SSS disbursed to members in the first nine months, up 22 percent over the disbursements a year ago.

Payments for retirement benefits increased by 23 percent to P32.09 billion, due to two 30 percent raises across the board pension hikes implemented last August and in September last year, she said.

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DAMPE SERVICE AREA OF THE SUBIC-CLARK-TARLAC EXPRESSWAY

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) is inviting interested oil companies to participate in the bidding for the privatization and development of the 2 hectare portion of the Dampe Service Area of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (Sta. 27+730 Subic-bound).

Interested oil companies should submit their Letters of Interest to BCDA and must purchase the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the disposition that outlines, among others, the requirements that will enable the oil companies to participate in the bidding for the privatization.

The TOR for the disposition will be ready for distribution to interested proponents from 20 December 2007 to 09 January 2008 at the BCDA Corporate Center. A non-refundable fee of Php 20,000.00 will be charged for the TOR and payable to the BCDA in Cash or Manager's Check.

A conference among interested oil companies is tentatively set on 11 January 2008, at 10:00 a.m., at the BCDA Corporate Center. The objective of the conference is to discuss the Property, the TOR, and other clarifications from interested proponents. Interested proponents will be informed of the final schedule and venue of the conference through the contact numbers submitted to the BCDA.

Interested proponents can direct their inquiries to:

MR. VICTOR V. ZABLAN
Asset Disposition Program Committee Phase 3
Bases Conversion and Development Authority
BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St.
Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City

or they can contact Engr. Valentin R. Aquino at telephone numbers 816-6888 loc. 124 and 816-1043, email address: vaquino@bcda.gov.ph

(Sgd.) MR. VICTOR V. ZABLAN
Chairperson, Asset Disposition Program Committee Phase 3

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E-mail: pr_bar@inquirer.com.ph
inquirer@inquirer.com.ph

Alice Arlos Espinosa

'Mystery of the Christmas Star' premieres at SM SDC

THE RECENT PREMIERE OF THE "Mystery of the Christmas Star" had some of the brightest young stars gracing the event at the SM Science Discovery Center at the SM Mall of Asia.

Young stars from ABS-CBN – Morgan Young, Joseph Bitangcol, and Alwyn Uytingco and Pinoy Dream Academy finalist Mariaya Ines some of the three young star power in the museum as did the Power Big Brother housemates Mear Tarrayo, Dianne, Wendy Valdez, Bruce Quebral, Glaiza Abrahano, Mike Patria, and Zeke.

Most star sightings? Ghibi Sagpaup Kids were also there to explore the new technologies at SM Science Discovery Center, as were the kiddie stars Quizzie of "Super Inggit", Ella Garcenta of "La Vendetta", Eliza Pineda of "Her de Luna", and Cheska Salvador of "Marimar".

It also literally starry for those music fans Lani Mercado, Marisol Lane, and Elma Reyes, as well as dad Lander Vera Perez, who took their kids to watch the movie premiere at the SDC's planetarium.

Hosted by NBN News Anchor Pinky Aurora, the event began with a guided tour of the Science Discovery Center's attractions–the Image Pool, the Transport Station, the "What did the Three Wise Men see that night?" "What is the significance of this heavenly body?", and "When exactly was the birth of Christ?"

In 30 minutes, you will be taken on a trip back in time to join the Magi in their journey from Babylon to Bethlehem through the Elm, you will also be able to take a series of historical events in a planetarium-type theater and learn more about the skies and how some of the earliest astronomers took track of their discoveries and astronomical sightings, guided by the learning journey in collecting answers from the past and present, we will learn how we can use celebrities as one of the most important dates in our calendar.

"The Mystery of the Christmas Star" is now showing at the Planetarium of the Science and Discovery Center located at the Breakwater Stanzuminum Wall of the SM Mall of Asia. For inquiries and group booking reservations, call 556-8331 or 556-8861.

SHAMPOO Gen

Earthquake Experiences, the Life Clock, and the Virtual Reef, where they interacted with Mr. T, the talking fish.

The highlight of the event was the gala premiere of the "Mystery of the Christmas Star", the story of the Three Wise Men who followed the star to Bethlehem at SDC's Digistar Planetarium.

The 2D feature seeks to solve the mystery behind the spectacular

MARIAN RIVERA STARS IN NEW PLDT CARD

After creating the hearts of millions of television audiences as Electra, television's brightest primetime princess Marian Rivera lights her PLDT forehead as the face of PLDT Card's latest ad campaign. The Card Corporation unveiled their recently debuted to all major TV networks and to air in major print ads. Meanwhile, also graces the new PLDT Touch Card Special Edition, a remarkable re-invention of the iconic PLDT. The PLDT Touch Card Special Edition is the PLDT Card that can be applied at all-in-one telecom needs. Just like PLDT Touch Card, it offers more affordable IDD rates at P5 per minute and IDD rates for as low as P6 per minute. It is also available using PLDT load so you can reuse it as often as you want. Aside from the added convenience, users can rack up more attractive extra time than reload with PLDT load. For more information, visit www.pldt.com.ph until Jan. 31, you get P15 extra load automatically. Shown during the launching of PLDT Touch Card Duet left are Dominick Balingit, assistant vice president, PLDT Cards and Prepaid Products, Eric S. Alberto Sr., vice president, PLDT customer care and marketing, Marian Rivera, PLDT Cards star, Dan Rivera, PLDT retail business head, and Sheriaar Ramos, brand management of PLDT

Insular Life Visa Credit Card launched

INSULAR LIFE, THE FIRST AND LARGEST Filipino life insurance company, has partnered with Eurocredit to introduce Insular Life Visa Credit Card, a credit card with exclusive privileges for its policyholders.

Reflective of Insular Life's innovative spirit and commitment to its aim to become a one-stop full financial service institution, the Insular Life Visa Credit Card offers its policyholders the flexibility to budget their funds through a 0-percent interest over 3 months "installment enhancement promo," zero payment are charged to the Insular Life Visa Credit Card via the company's Premium Deal Line.

The Insular Life Visa Credit Card also offers premium payment convenience. Policyholders may soon charge their insurance premium payments to Insular Life Visa credit card and enjoy a wide network of payment channels for the easy payment. This will ensure automatic payment of premiums, keeping the policy in force and the insured fully covered.

And to reward Insular Life policyholders deserve to enjoy the good life, the Card offers lifestyle-driven benefits such as a discount program from health and wellness establishment partners, a concierge service that does all sorts of errands, it is also a travel companion with travel insurance coverage, and a free access to Club Manila airport lounge in Hulo.

Cardholders will also enjoy life's simple pleasures with a privilege point program that allows them to convert points to cash rebates, get vouchers for free gas, dining and shopping, transfer to a mileage program or exchange for other items.

Insular Life knows no boundaries when it comes to giving its policyholders the convenience. Insular Life Visa Credit Card gives access to a wide range of services such as worldwide acceptance, a 24/7 customer service, utility bills payment, an installment payment plan, cyberassurance and more!

The Insular Life Visa Credit Card is powered by UnionBank. UnionBank Credit Cards is the leader in co-brand and affinity credit card partnership. Today it has 16 co-brand and affinity credit cards in partnership with retail, educational, medical, and financial and service institutions. Insular Life Visa Credit Card is UnionBank's first co-brand credit card. To apply for an Insular Life Visa Credit Card, call 845-8600 (for Metro Manila) and domestic toll free 1-800-1845-2277 (outside Metro Manila).

'MaAga ang Pasko sa Jollibee' Year 13 brings cheer to Pinoy kids

FAVORITE FASTFOOD CHAIN JOLLIBee and award-winning actor Agot Isidro once again team up for the biggest and longest-running yuletide book drive in the country starting Friday in Jollibee. Already on its 13th year, the campaign takes in donations from Christmas to the Philippines, which is considered a special time for children. While local festivities are never complete without a delicious media noche buena spread, colorful parols, and the sound of carols filling the air, nothing tops the whole experience quite like seeing the big smiles on kids' faces. Whether gazing admirably at huge commercial displays, tasting their favorite yummy delights, or opening the gifts so lovingly prepared for them, children's love for Christmas is infectious and heartwarming. "MaAga ang Pasko sa Jollibee", in partnership with STI Foundation, hopes to bring this cheer to thousands of less-privileged children through the generosity of people who wish to help them.

"To see a young boy's or girl's face light up with a wide open smile as they say a book, even a used one, never fails to warm my heart," said Agot. "Children have a way of showing their appreciation. I guess getting a book or toy from Jollibee makes them happy, knowing that there are people who remember them at Christmas."

Since Nov. 12, toys and books can be dropped off at specially marked boxes in Jollibee stores all over the country. All the toys and books collected will go to boys and girls under the care of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) many accredited institutions. Right before Christmas, Jollibee and Agot will hold a special celebration where the toys and books will be distributed among kids. Over the years, the drive has distributed more than 175 000 toys and books to as many Filipino children and has inspired countless companies to embark on similar programs.

"The achievement of MaAga ang Pasko sa Jollibee goes beyond numbers," said Gold Tanseco, Jollibee's new vice president for corporate marketing. "Apart from pioneering this kind of program, it puts focus on the emotional needs of less privileged children. We are thankful to everyone who has been part of the campaign. Every year, more people need to find that they are loved. These gifts that the Filipino people receive through us give those kids hope. That is our measure of success."

In appreciation for the support that the campaign continues to receive, Jollibee and Agot have collected Operation Smile, Gawad Kalinga, Pasig Magdat, Sta. Ana Shelter, Children's Library, Hospicio de San Jose, Caritas Manila, Volante Foundation, Cebu, Tommy Boy, Manila Ocampo Manila and White Cross Children's Home in the list of beneficiaries. Those organizations were named by the media partners of "MaAga ang Pasko sa Jollibee" namely: The Philippine Star, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, Manila Standard Today, Summit Media, Daily Tribune, ABS-CBN Publishing, MSPI, Alaska, Summerwell, Filstar Group of Companies and the Journal Group of Publications, all network supporters of the campaign since it started over a decade ago.

Toys and books donation may also be brought to select STI Schools in Metro Manila. Jollibee branches nationwide will be accepting donations until Jan. 6, 2008.

DHL launches 'Jumbo & Friends' promo

DHL, THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPRESS and logistics company, offers a special treat this holiday season. Customers who send of DHL Jumbo Jumbo, Jumbo Box or Express Duffel until Dec. 31 will receive free Jumbo & Friends collectibles.

DHL clients with Jumbo Jumbo International shipments will receive a Jumbo, Molly or Tig stuffed toy. Jumbo Box International clients will get their Jumbo & Friends soft toys, while Express Duffel shipments come with a set of Tig, Molly and Jumbo collectibles, or one Mama Panda toy.

Gift-giving and sending packages this Christmas is now even more enjoyable with DHL Jumbo & Friends yuletide promos. Clients who send express shipments via DHL are guaranteed reliability, quality service with DHL's All the Way commitment to address their clients' needs.

DHL Jumbo Jumbo, Jumbo Box and Express Duffel services are available at all DHL Service Points, DHL Service Centers and Wide Wide World Express Outlets. Call 811-7000 (in excl of DHL Jumbo & Friends Christmas promo and other DHL world-class express services.

Promo runs until Dec. 31, per DTI-NCR permit number 4307.

Schering-Plough wins 3 Scrip World Industry awards

SCHERING-PLOUGH CORP (NYSE: SGP) was honored by Scrip World Pharmaceutical recently with three top pharmaceutical industry awards: Large Pharma Company of the Year, Management Team of the Year, and Company of the Year for Fred Hassan, Schering-Plough chair and CEO.

The Scrip Awards are designed to recognize excellence and achievements within the pharmaceutical and biotech industries. Scrip World Pharmaceutical News, a leading provider of news and analysis for the global pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, held its third annual awards ceremony last night in London.

"We are honored and inspired by winning these three awards," said Hassan. "They are a testament to the courage and tenacity of our people around the world who have executed the remarkable transformation of Schering-Plough in our quest to bring new medicines.

"The passion of our people for our science, for our customers and for our patients is a special strength. As we now launch our combination with Organon Biosciences, our people are working around that passion. We will be working hard to realize the exciting new promise of our company," Hassan said. "And we will not lose sight of handling."

Schering-Plough is an innovative, science-centered global health care company. Through its own biopharmaceutical research and collaborations with partners, Schering-Plough creates therapies that help save and improve lives around the world. The company applies its research-and-development platform to human prescription and consumer products in several global health products. In November 2007, Schering-Plough acquired Organon Biosciences, with its Organon human health and human and animal health businesses, marking a pivotal step in the company's ongoing transformation. Schering-Plough's vision is to "Earn Trust, Every Day" with the doctors, workers, customers and other stakeholders served by its approximately 50,000 people around the world. The company is based in Kenilworth, New Jersey, and its Website is www.schering-plough.com.

A healthy Christmas diet with Jus'4 Kids Plus

PEOPLE—WHETHER THEY ARE adults, teenagers, or children—can still maintain a healthy, well-balanced diet even during the festive Christmas and the holiday season.

This is the view shared by many health professionals and dietitians.

Christmas and New Year celebrations are not normally viewed as good occasions for anyone to pursue a diet. The amount and variety of food available during the season is intimidating for people on a diet. Experts believe otherwise.

"Christmas should not mean the end of a healthy diet. We should actually be more wary of our food consumption during the Christmas season," according to Regina Neba, marketing manager of pharmaceutical and nutraceuticals firm Interphil Laboratories Inc.

Equipped with an expertise in nutrition and health, Switzerland-based Interphil produces, sells and markets medicines and multivitamins, and juice products under the Jus'4Kids brand.

"Parents in particular should watch and monitor what their children eat and drink during Christmas celebrations, because young kids aren't normally conscious of the dietary consequences of their food intake," Neba added.

The key to maintaining a healthy diet for children, according to experts, is moderation. Health and dietary experts say parents and guardians should not totally ban sweets and candies. They also discourage over-consumption and overeating among children.

"I would also tell parents to give their children fruits and vegetables. Also, they should limit, as possible, sweet, their kids' intake of carbonated sodas or unhealthy beverages," Neba advised.

A healthier and more nourishing alternative to these beverages is Jus'4Kids Plus, a product of Switzerland Laboratories.

A healthy juice drink formulated for kids, Jus'4Kids Plus is fortified with vitamin A, iron, and iodine. With adequate intake, these micronutrients—which are recommended by the Department of Health—significantly improve the growth and development of children.

Jus' 4 Kids Plus, which comes in mango and orange flavors, is made of natural juice concentrates and puree and no artificial flavors. It is enriched with vitamins C, E, B, and Zinc.

The juice drink also contains Chlorella Growth Factor or CGF, which promotes physical growth in children, and Taurine, an amino acid that helps in the development of the brain and nervous system.

The prestigious Orthodox publication "Beverage Innovations" recognized Jus' 4 Kids Plus, saying that the juice drink is one of a growing number of vitamin-enriched health beverages around the world that offer its users modern antidotes of health benefits.

Jus' 4 Kids Plus is currently available in leading supermarkets all over Metro Manila, including Rustan Supermarkets, Landmark, Robinsons, Hunter's Supermarkets, Shopwise, SM Supermarkets, South Supermarket, Valuepoint, and Waltermart. It is also available in Cavite, Batangas, and Laguna.

Come to our Open House
on Dec. 20 (Thu.), Dec. 21 (Fri.) and
Dec. 22 (Sat.), 9 am to 10 pm.
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(#7 Esmeralda Penthouse, 11 E. Perea St.,
Legaspi Village, Makati City)

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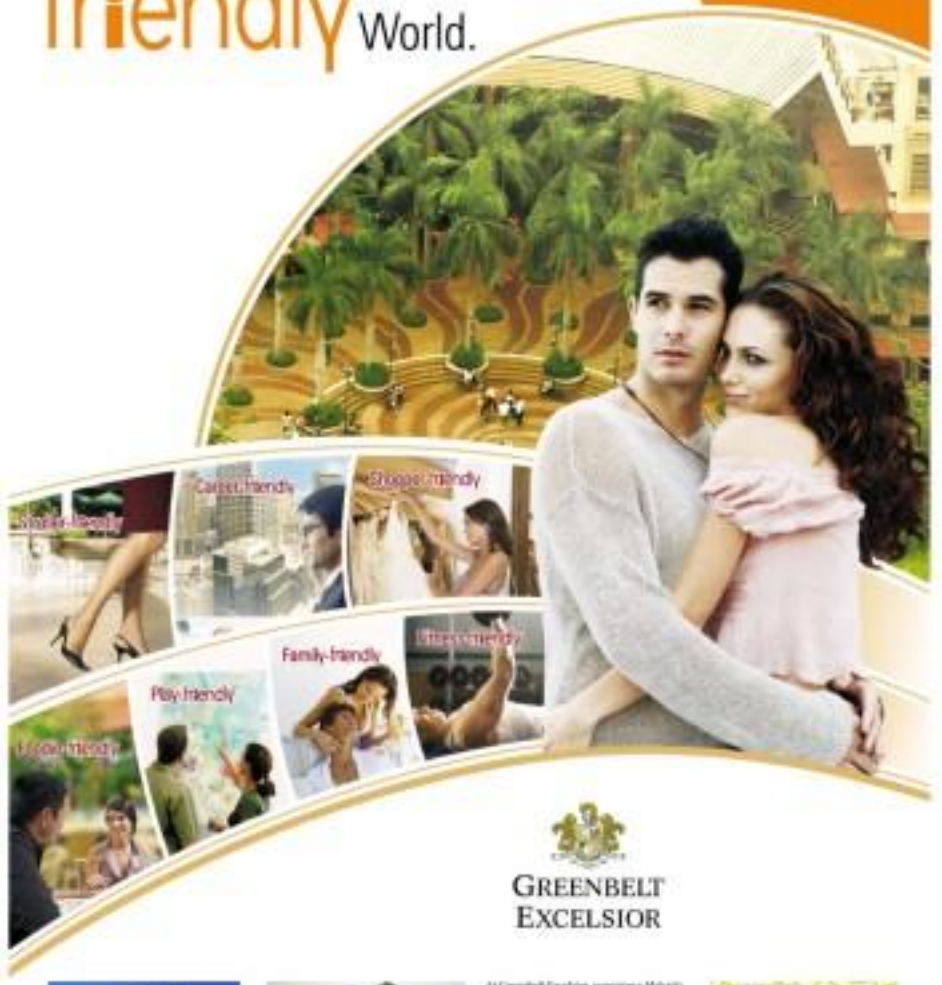

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LIFESTYLE

SAMSUNG'S below-wade avocado with kamayan seafood boat

COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Fenix

The changing dining scene

MY SISTER LIVES IN HOME FROM Panama where she is based. She tell only sixty a short while in there will be on long trips out of town.

But, like all families, whose members are coming home for the holidays, the nagging question is where to take the bubbly guy in on.

The question is also asked by Filipinos abroad who want to know where they can eat when they come home. Because I live in Metro Manila, most of my recommendations are around the area. It makes it easier for me when I know what kind of clubs they like.

Of course there is nothing like a home-cooked meal. Or food bought from specialists. But, for variety Ashkhazeys are taken out to sample the local restaurant scene.

Not just 'carinderia'

My trips to Davao Bicol and Leyte have shown me that there are restaurants that are no longer in the mold of the carinderia and turo-turo.

Just as the lessons of overseas workers' families have changed the landscape in the provinces (for better or worse), the new restaurants have changed the dining scene.

Some still do regional cooking, though tweaked a bit. And usually the ambience is something to talk about.

In Leyte, just a short drive from downtown Tacloban, guests were welcomed to the Fabel home and garden in a nine-second station. An open-air walk led to the restaurant, a structure that reminded some visitors of the spacious wood huts in Bali, Indonesia. All around, the landscaped place was given with private nooks.

In the dining area, one wall was colored a fashionable red with touches of green. Two sides were open. In the one that looked out to a garden and a pond, conversation areas were covered with sofas and interesting coffee tables.

All the dining tables were covered with crocheted table-cloths. Some chairs had backs of woven abaca and seats covered with hemp.

The menu showed local dishes that one can say is Filipino, but not necessarily Leyteño, cooking. We had fish escapeq, a salad of the vegetables that they said were grown in the farm and town. In the pastry display case, the mini cakes were what we could get from any enhanced venue in the country.

Most of the diners were Ashkhazeys and their hosts, but our relatives that we did not even know were residing.

The owner is Rose Tanap. He started with a restaurant in Tacloban called 'Iran Ito' and a produce shop that sold meat, meats to cook food and vegetables. Tanap is a young entrepreneur who decided to stay and do business in his home province.

Well-made lodgings

Having traveled throughout the country, we few lodgings impressed us. But, in Leyte, we stayed in well-made hotels and resorts.

Casa Isidro Bacilio in Ormoc is a two-story building, small and unpretentious with a homey feeling but with touches of sensible interior design that uses the products of Leyte such as the wooden furniture. Vigan tiles and also well hanging.

What is more important is that it is clean and comfortable, the plumbing works, the beds allow you to sleep peacefully and the air-conditioner works. The food is good traditional cooking and the staff of owner Bob. by Diaz allows you to go to the kitchen to watch demonstrate.

Across the Ormoc church, the Rosario Cafe is known for its and hot pizza. But the vegetables with cheese somehow do not work as well as the linguine and linguini version.

The mimosa consists of antique chairs and food. The mural in the dining area showed like Benedicto to Guernica. It gave an eclectic of what's to come as you enter the office Dr. Irvin Canaang-oren feels the call and the cancer.

But the sweet looks infinitely better than the passing. Again, there was a collection of antique furniture and modern amenities.

Updating the provincial

A more updated take on provincial cooking was at the mansion Café of Sammy Mar. Dr. small elongated space last weeken. It-

THE SINFUL ingot pizza at Mamasita Cafe

imagine this season's most stylish gift

Samsung gives you this exclusive and limited offer. Every purchase of the U800 and the U700 within the promo period of December 5 – 25, 2007, at participating dealers nationwide, entitles you to a Bvlgari gift pack which will be given upon purchase of the phone. With Samsung, it's not that hard to imagine.

SAMSUNG

BAKED Lamb Shank

Chef's Quarter may be just the place for occasional indulgences and celebratory meals

TEXAS Torsa Salad

Fine dining on a budget

Text by Linda B. Bobis
Photos by Rony Hendiola

TWO VETERANS IN THE FOOD BUSINESS have decided there is no reason why fine dining should be the prerogative of a select few.

Lanzy Cortez and chef Hiram Arjona Jr., the pair behind Pepe et Surrender that draws the likes of the Madame, Imelda Bonnacidas Marcos, found the right spot for their "total innovation of fine dining cuisine" of the new Midtown, the expansion wing of Robinsons Place Manila.

Located at the corner of Adriatico and Pedro Gil Sts. and offering both indoor and al fresco dining options, Chef's Quarter Restaurant & Wine Bar's menu may seem not for ordinary diners, even when they feel like treating themselves to some meal.

But, with several meals available for less than P400, it may be just the place for occasional indulgences and celebratory meals.

Options include Grilled Baby Back Ribs, Braised Lamb Shank, Chef's Quinoa Steak, Tuna Fillet Bonne Femme and Grilled Lapu-lapu Fillet.

Set days a week there is a set lunch for P490 per person, with a choice of fish or meat for main course. More elaborate...and sumptuous meals—courtesy are also available.

Open from breakfast to dinner (7 a.m.-11 p.m.), the restaurant is ready to accommodate whatever the customer feels like—drink for breakfast and pass salad for lunch or dinner.

A mainstay on the menu and definitely an attention-grabber is the Texas Tornas Salad, named after the landlord's occasional after ego.

Its list breakfast for the new restaurant are, for breakfast, Sole Fillet Tortas with scrambled egg and garlic rice, Salmon General Lacho with hash brown potato and scrambled egg, Beef Steak Tagalog with garlic rice, scrambled egg and fried tuba-gang

CHEF'S Quarter does chicken hash. Featured inside are the works of artist actor Ervin Garcia, including special furniture for the cabin

(eggplant), and Steak and Egg with grilled tomatoes and diabolo mushroom served with some side-up egg and garlic toast bread.

Other salads that are popular with diners are Marinated Salmon Carpaccio Trio, Seared Tuna Sashimi, Caprese and Escargot and Mushrooms.

Its declared joints are Spaghetti Carbonara, Flo Gied Paella, Baked Three Cheese Lasagna with Bolognese Sauce, and Chef's Quarter's own concoction.

Ribs, steak, fish and other seafood are, as in the expected, selling well.

Chef's Quarter will be open for lunch and dinner on Christmas Eve and will offer a choice of Roast Turkey or Roast Beef. Closed on Christmas Day, it will reopen on Dec. 26.

For both New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, it will offer a choice of turkey or lamb for lunch and dinner.

Texas Tornas Salad
(Old Time Favorite)

- 35 g assorted lettuce leaf
- 50 g marinated salmon (spread lachs)
- 2 pc. grilled prawns
- 2 pc. grilled shrimps
- .05 cup cucumber
- .05 cup julienne
- .05 barrel shallots
- 40 ml creamy balsamic

Braised Lamb Shank

- 1 pc. 300-350 g lamb shank
- 1 pc. eggplant (cut into cubes, fried)
- 1 c. fat sweety
- Cilantro curry sauce
- 5 g curry powder
- .05 g cilantro
- 200 ml coconut milk
- 50 g tomato diced
- 50 g onion diced
- cilantro if needed

Procedure:

- Season the lamb with salt and pepper.
- Sear in a black pan for coloring.
- Sauté the onion, tomato and curry pow-

PISTACHIO Meringue

PEPPERED Steak

der.
- Add coconut milk and cilantro.
- Place the lamb shank and braise until tender and cook.
- Add salt and pepper to taste.
- Add stock if needed.
- Make sure the meat of the lamb is always covered from the sauce before serving.

Chef's Quarter Restaurant & Wine Bar is at Level 1, Midtown Wing, Robinsons Place Adriatico corner Pedro Gil St., Ermita, 28.1844/501.7774/5677.9930. e-mail: chefquarter@yahoo.com

A surefire Noche Buena hit

MAMA JEN HELPS YOU MAKE your Noche Buena spread a surefire hit with this easy-to-follow recipe.

You can use Mama Sita mixes and condiments for your other holiday dishes.

Paella Pilipina

- 1 c. uncooked
- 2½ c. hot chicken stock
- 1 c. chicken stock
- 1 tsp. Mama Sita's Calderetta Mix
- 1 tsp. Mama Sita's achuete powder
- 2 tbsp. olive or vegetable oil
- 1 pc. chorizo, cut into ½-inch diagonal slices
- 1 c. chicken, cut into ½-inch diagonal slices
- 1 c. shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 5 pc. squid, small, cut into ½-inch diagonal rings
- 1 tsp. garlic, minced
- ½ c. onions
- 2 pc. tomatoes, cored, de-seeded and chopped
- 1 pc. red bell pepper, minced
- 1 tbsp. peas
- 1 tbsp. Mama Sita's Calderetta Mix
- 2 pc. medium-size blue crabs, split in halves
- 1 L/½ c. tubong
- 1 L/½ c. kalasi soaked in water for 10 minutes to remove sand
- 1 pc red bell pepper cut into strips
- 1 pc green bell pepper, cut into strips
- 2/½ c green peas
- 1 pc hard-boiled egg, cut into round slices (optional)
- 2 tbsp spring onions, chopped for garnish

In a pot, combine the glutinous and long-grain rice. Rinse twice. Drain. Return to pot and add 4½ c. chicken stock and Mama Sita's achuete powder. Stir until well blended. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer. Cover and cook until done, about 20 minutes. Turn off heat and allow to cool for at least 10 minutes. Set aside.

In a paellera or a large sauté pan, heat oil. Sauté chorizo for a minute. Remove. Sauté shrimp for about two to three minutes. Remove. Add squid, sauté for one minute or just until it changes color to milky white. Remove.

In the same pan, over high heat, sauté garlic and onions for 30 seconds. Add tomatoes and cook until soft. Add peppers. Sauté for one minute.

Add fish sauce, the remaining ½ c stock and Mama Sita's Calderetta Mix. Bring mixture to a boil, lower the heat, and arrange crabs on top. Cover and simmer for five minutes.

Add mussels and clams. Continue to simmer for another three minutes or until shells open. Remove from heat.

Stir in red and green bell pepper strips and peas. Cook the mixture for another minute.

To finish, add the shrimp, squid, chorizo, shrimp and squid. Toss until the mixture is well blended.

Garnish top with boiled egg and spring onions, if desired. Serve hot.

Makes eight servings.

THE CONSUMER

Snail may be faster than PhilPost

By Linda B. Bolido

TO CALL THE END OF SERVICE PERIOD, the U. Tobias got from the Philippine Postal Corp. (PhilPost) office in Laguna's small mail sniff (snail) is likely to be much to the mail's ails.

Tobias of Santa Cruz said he opposed to get a letter from Los Baños in the same province. The letter bore the prospective recipient's complete address, including zip code, and had a PP postage stamp. It was mailed on Nov. 9.

By Dec. 6, almost a month later, Tobias still had not received the letter.

He said when he complained to the postmaster in Santa Cruz, the PhilPost official was apologetic but said an ordinary letter was harder to move than registered or priority mail.

Like most our friend Haven B. R. Villanueva, postmaster general and Philpost chief executive officer, will be unhappy to hear about that kind of service. So, if he is reading this, perhaps he can direct the Laguna post office here to find out what happened to the letter. And for sure it is ordinary mail to entrust to here is like garbage.

The kind of service will deliver our efforts by PhilPost officials to make the agency profitable. It is good material to lose PhilPost to free-enterprise duress.

E-mail and short messaging service are almost instantaneous. And while private couriers or services is expensive, at least you can compel delivery companies to find out what happened to a missing package.

Clean and green Christmas

Young members of a Catholic community in Manila recently helped to spread the message of eco-friendly holiday celebration.

Twelve children and youth volunteers, made to look like Christmas gifts, stood by the doors of the Malate church to give participants tree-and-green Christmas.

Behind them was a big green, red and yellow banner saying "Within is Assisting Malate Brgdo Kay (Christ is our caring) friends."

The children reminded churchgoers of the need to avoid wasteful consumption during the holidays.

The initiative was jointly undertaken by the Care for the Earth Ministry of the Our Lady of Remedios Parish in Malate and the Ecotrust Coalition.

Fr. John Leydon, MSSC, parish priest, said: "Celebrating Christmas is a way that prevents further harm and injustice in the environment is a right step toward the conversion that we all need to make to Christ's ways and rewards of God's covenant."

Fr. Leydon added, "Let us honor the baby in the manger by not making Christmas."

The "gift hunts" offered different fix, simple, affordable and groups circles to reduce trash during the holidays. They included:

■ Reverse Christ, learn to simplicity and poverty, as the principal reason for the season celebrations.

■ Review Christmas plans and expenses, cut unnecessary purchases and use savings to help families in need.

■ Reduce climate changing emissions by conserving electricity and avoiding holiday garbage as all items.

■ Reuse stuff like Christmas decorations or money items as possible.

■ Repair broken things before buying new ones.

■ Recycle materials for traveling or composting by separating the bulk as sources.

■ Recycle waste and generate recycled products.

■ Reuse (reduction, gardens and other organic channels as compost or materials depleted soil.

■ Reduce plastic bags and opt for biodegradable and other reusable boxes bags and containers.

■ Reject the cycle of wasting by declining things that cannot be created, repaired or recycled.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Makati's and Sigue Sts., Makati City, or e-mail lbolido@inquirer.com.ph

Holiday pleasures in Baguio

THE MANOR AT CAMP JOHN Hay in Baguio City has lined up various activities for the holidays.

Pitch the opening of the Gingerbread House, Le Chef Deli makes available traditional Christmas treats Like Fruit Cakes, Customized Christmas Cookies, Strollen, Christmas Lilies, Christmas Puddings and Mince Pies. Also available are Christmas hampers and special orders.

Until Dec. 25 , Baguio's best chefs sing Christmas carols in the lobby. On Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 at 7 p.m., Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve Masses will be held in garden.

Chef Bibi Ong is preparing special Christmas Day and New Year's Eve dinners. On Dec. 24, there will be a mini Media Reunion.

The Books Baguio buffet will be served 10:30 p.m.-2 a.m.

Christmas Day and New Year's Eve specials include three-man sinugs bread dough, Steamed Sticky Rice, Braised Leg of Lamb with Jus and Wine Jelly, Beef Bulgogue and Braised 10 Tea Turkey.

Christmas dinner is 6-11 p.m.

On New Year's Eve, diners get one complimentary glasses of sparkling wine 11 minutes before the New Year countdown.

Call: 074-4243901 loc. 1101 and 1017 or 074-4246507).

The changing dining scene

From page C1

bles and chairs. What serves as the buffet table at the small display area by the window.

We had Ladies, stuffed mitts are, mains' oregano and the local basil. The sauce had been mixed to with a bit of pork blood.

Using the empanada is our recipe, then, tinted with more made to be toast with a side of tomatoes, onions, mango and calamon. The sour, spicy was placed on top of spaghetti noodles.

We had traditional rule that did not look bolognese, but an egg pooping out of the noodle soup in tangled mess, as each bowl. The Ubaghi with crushed peanut on soup was to serve recipes.

When Sammy showed was that on updated look did not mean the traditional was lost.

Our last day was lunch at Mount Cascade Garden run by Ilya Gutierrez, a busy career who squeezed out meal into her schedule. While her cooking includes very Gutierrez dishes like roast beef, she let her parents enjoy Ilocano cooking including mouthwatering cooked on site.

We had adobo, kilawing baboy (Ginger-cured boiled pork) and sautéed soup. I did not know I missed eating the sautéed green until eating here (I like sauted vegetables on the three best stomach. There is vine, sea lice, tails as sea by those who cannot stand her chili.

Ilya's spread, emphasized those vegetables. She had a palette of fresh pesto, and she made several salads of saltee eg ups (species of bamy grandly nalung. Dandaca (boiled, fermented Lenyap Beans) and green beans. What caught my eye was the balayba, a fruit-vegetable, because of its color name—"I shall return."

Ilya explained that it was a vegetable that could not be digested by the body so boiled strictly the latter values engulfed.

"Ate Ilsaty something new every time.

E-mail the author at yoay@philstar.com

THE DINING counter at Mahal Farms and Garden, Loo's

MARINATE deboned chicken in calamansi, soy sauce and pepper for an hour. Set aside.

IN A BOWL, mix together ground chicken, ground pork and white onions.

ADD raisins, sweet ham, cheese and peas. Blend well.

ADD pickle relish, liver spread and beaten eggs. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Mix thoroughly and set aside for few minutes.

CLOSE neck portion of the chicken with cotton string so the meat-filling remains inside. Drain chicken and stuff it/sew it into the cavity, eliminating air pockets as you move from neck to rear.

ALONG with the stuffing, insert four hard-boiled eggs (two under the wings and two near the legs) and four pieces of sausages arranged lengthwise. Make sure not to overstuff chicken as steaming tends to expand stuffing.

SEW up the cavity.

TIE the chicken legs together with a string.

A 'secret' dish for the holidays

COOL chicken at room temperature before removing cheesecloth. Take off the strings. Wrap in sturdy foil and refrigerate (do not freeze) for several hours until chilled through.

GENTLY take out legs and wings and arrange nicely on a platter.

GALANTINA is best sliced when cold with a very sharp knife. Cut chicken in the center.

THEN make smaller slices. Serve on platter garnished with curled spring onions, cucumber slices, bell pepper and lettuce.

Text by Margie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Jon Dolor Pascual

EVEN AT 71, GLORIA "GIGI" PEREZ-Bendejero never fails to whip up her best-kept secret dish for the season of celebration. Her Chicken Galantina is a mainstay during holidays and other family get-togethers.

She learned the recipe when she was 20 years old from her half Filipino, half Spanish mother-in-law, Candida Diez—from skinning the chicken to meat tearing to seasoning and precise slicing.

Galantina is stuffed deboned chicken wrapped in cheesecloth or aluminum foil then steamed or boiled until done. The stuffing is usually a combination of ground pork, sausage, ham, carrots, pickles and cooked eggs.

Galantina is sliced thinly then served cold usually with gravy.

Bendejero's version is more flavorful and richer as the acidic liver paté in stuffing. She does not use canteen as it gives a different flavor to the texture.

She also omits the gravy as the chicken is already juicy and savory enough.

For four decades now, Bendejero has been filling orders from family and friends. But now she has decided to slow down a bit, accepting only a few orders.

Here, Bendejero shares her famed chicken recipe she named Galantina a la Candida after her mother-in-law.

Materials needed include boning knife, sewing kneel, clean fabric or thick cheesecloth, big stainless steel needle and gauge 20 cotton string, steamer and aluminum foil.

To make distressing tender, make sure the chicken is really cold before you begin. Or ask your cook to do the number to debone it. Bendejero buys her chicken at Farmer's Market and Sepa-Q Mart.

Steaming time for chicken is about an hour starting from the moment the water boils. Otherwise the chicken will be undercooked.

Galantina can be prepared ahead of time and kept frozen for a month. Then you can add it to your noche buena table. It can be an appetizer or a paella side dish, or served Pinoy-style with garlic fried rice.

As appetizer, make dinner galantina slices; as main course, slices should be thicker. The dish can also be used as pulutan for friends.

For orders, call or text Bendejero four days in advance at 0927.4612736.

Step By Step

Ingredients

1 (3 ½ tough-skinned (tuffed) chicken or chicken, deboned, deboned except for legs and wings. Avoid puncturing the skin, otherwise sew up any holes before marinating.

Marinade:

2 tbsp calamansi juice
1 tbsp soy sauce

Stuffing:

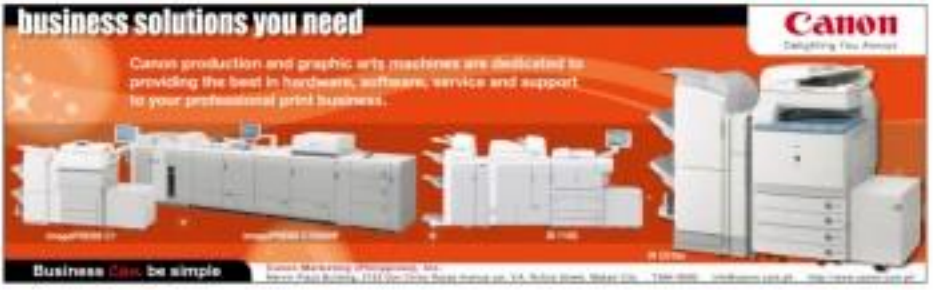
½ k ground chicken
220 g ground lean pork
½ k sweet ham, chopped
½ c sweet pickle relish
1 c grated cheddar cheese
½ c green peas
½ c rubber onions, minced
½ c raisins
1 small cut liver spread or pated meat
2 medium-size eggs
1 can chicken Vienna sausage
4 large eggs, hard boiled
1 level tbsp of salt
½ tsp white pepper
Steaming liquid:
2 pc chicken broth cubes
1 c water

For suggestions, e-mail the author at thegrill@quirinoave.ph

MASSAGE softened uncooked butter onto entire chicken.

WRAP the entire chicken in cheesecloth and secure.

PLACE chicken in steamer with water infused with chicken broth. Steam chicken (breast side down) for 45 minutes and the other side for another 15 minutes.



Dining Out

NEW PIZZA AT EASTWOOD CITY

Yellow Cab, the reliable pizza delivery company, has more unique offerings. It just launched the Roasted Garlic and Shrimp Pizza, a savory pizza topped with shrimp, roasted garlic and onion rings in olive butter sauce. Also available are Potato Hubris... half portions of baked potato topped with cream, cheese and bacon bits. Yellow Cab's Eastwood City branch is at City Walk 1, 421-2222, text 0917-SERVCITY.

Yuletide specials

EMERALD PLAZA GALLERIA MANILA CARRIES ON ITS TRADITION of serving blue glass during the holidays. This year, Blanco Cocinera, Restaurant is presenting a mini a la carte offering of holiday grazing-style dishes including creamy Yule pine pumpkin soup ravioli and pan-seared foie gras salad with red grape reduction. For entrées, choices range from tenderloin and roast wrapped Yuletide log to roasted duck breast with seared foie gras. Buffet stations will be dotted with Yule grace stations, from salads to pasta, etc. Eric Tam Di will offer foie gras dumplings and steamed buns, as well as Yule grace "spiked" willows. A Christmas Eve grand buffet will be offered Dec. 24. Tel. 6097203.

MAKATI SHANGRI-LA offers Christmas brunch on Dec. 25, 10 a.m. at the hotel's Garden Ballroom. The brunch buffet features Asian New Zealand fish and Roast Turkey. The buffet is priced at P1,850 (adult) and P825 (kids). Call 8430884 or 8130888 loc 15897/98.

BUDDY HOTEL'S Gourmet, available until Dec. 6 are traditional Christmas treats like Stollen, Panettone Gonza, Mincepie Impression, Plum Pudding, Chocolate Candy House, Chocolate Basket with Pralines, Fruit Cake, Gold and hot selections like Orange Flavored Duckling Terrine with Cumberland sauce, Roast Turkey Ballotine with Pistachio Nuts, Roast US Rib Eye of Angus Beef with Peppercorn Classic Toast to be ordered at least two days in advance. Different Christmas Hampers are also available. Buddy Gourmet is at the G/L Buddy Hotel Makati, Ayala Center, Makati. Call 8870000 loc. 3305.

MANDARIN ORIENTAL MANILA presents yuletide offerings. On Christmas Eve, Pierre Jinn offers holiday dinner buffet at P1,888++ (adult), P1,388+ (child), 6-11 p.m.; The Box, P1,488++ and P1,188+ per person (minimum two persons), 6:30-10 p.m. Inspired a la carte menu also available. The Twist dinner set menu at P3,188+ inclusive of one glass of champagne (adult), P1,800+ (child), 7-10:30 p.m. Christmas Day dining offerings include Pierre Jinn, gourmet lunch buffet at P1,688++ (adult), P988+ (child), 12 noon-3:30 p.m., and dinner buffet at P1,888++ (adult), P1,288+ (child), 7-10:30 p.m. The Box's lunch and dinner buffet set menus at P1,288+ to P2,488+ per person (minimum two persons), 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 6:30-10:30 p.m., or The Box's lunch set menus, P1,388+ and P2,488+ (adult), P1,188+ and P1,488+ (child), 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., and dinner set menus, P1,988+ and P2,488+ (adult), P1,188+ and P1,488+ (child), 7-10:30 p.m. A gingerbread house to-be display at the lobby and showcases Mandarin's three signature hampers: P9,500-P16,000 and other holiday offerings.

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT SUBGOO. The restaurant offers Supreme Sampler (combination of Burger's favorite appetizers such as Mozzarella Sticks, Buffalo Chicken Wings, Stix, Po Spring Rolls and Onion Rings), Shrimp and Pitin Platter (served with Battered French fries and corn on the cob) and the Seafood Sandwiches, among others (tel. nos. POTHOK 8908 0 12, 6477254, 7243173, 9136111, 9268891 or 6336394).

Gift of bread

PAN DE MANILA, THE BAKERY THAT brought back the traditional pan de sal, is offering the Small Box. The breads are freshly baked every hour inside old style pugon. All the breads contain no preservatives, artificial flavors or colors. They are also made with quality ingredients like Isabela Asa flour. Complement the bread box with Pan de Manila's Pandesal Pasko with assorted spreads. One pack contains Spanish sardines in spicy extra oil, extra virgin olive oil, and tuntun. The other pack has all-natural peanut butter and sweet jam. Also available as gravy, mango, and pandesal celebration. Pan de Manila is open: 24/7 (8300468 or 0917-8992908).

CHEF Elizabeth's Catering offers his specialties for the holiday season: All Roast Turkey with choice of wood, apple and apricot, and oyster stuffing, Rich Chicken Relleno, Leeban de Lechs, All Roast Black Angus Ribeye or Top Blade and Honey Baked Virginia Ham (7257222, 7249229, 0920-9201883, 0920-8434199).

Party trays

ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS MORE BY LETTING THE EXPERTS help you. Sara Private Caterer's offers Party Trays this Christmas, only that can feed 10-15 people. The Party Trays include everything from appetizers to desserts. Sara offers appetizer trays, pasta trays, entrée trays and pasta trays, salad trays, pasta trays, entrée trays and pork dinner trays. Sara is also offering a special Roast Christmas Turkey with apple, chestnut and sausage stuffing with all the trimmings. Orders must be made at least two days in advance (tel. nos. 8126401 or 8126837 loc. 302). Trays may be picked up at Sara's main kitchen on Pasong Tamo, Greenhills Promenade branch or Greenbelt 2 branch. (e-mail privatecaterer@hotmail.com; visit http://www.thesaraservice.com).

Sweet and new treats

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO make your holiday spread special, try Kenny Rogers Roasters' two new muffin flavors: Caramel Banana Chip and Sugar Glazed Choco Muffins. Kenny's Caramel Banana Chip Muffin has the sweetness of perfectly ripe bananas and chocolate chips, with a sweet layer of crunchy caramel. Bite into Kenny's Sugar Glazed Choco Muffins and discover a deliciously moist chocolate muffin.

AUTHENTIC PEKING DUCK FOR NOCHE BUENA. Peking Duck, the Chinese delicacy whose origins date back to the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368), is made available in Filipino families this Christmas season by Yitang Roast & Tea House at the Cherry Foodarama in Antipolo City (e-mail: misterauthority@yahoo.com; tel. 681-4998/1434 loc 234).

Eat and be merry

THIS CHRISTMAS, LOOK for the 'M here, any place to go in select food establishments and enjoy instant discounts and freebies upon presenting your Metrobank Credit Card.

At Rustan, Metro and Temple Run, for instance, a 10 percent discount will be given Metrobank Credit Card holders. Using your Metrobank Credit Card (Classic Visa/MasterCard, Gold Visa/MasterCard, Pesona Visa, Value MasterCard, M MasterCard, M Lifestyle MasterCard, Go Masters Card, PHIKid Classic/Gold MasterCard, Peso/Dollar Platinum MasterCard and Gold Dollar MasterCard) becomes highly rewarding this holiday season as establishments with the 'M here, say please logo.

Christmas goodies

THEY SHOUT NEW MAGIC BROWNIES ARE AVAILABLE IN two flavors—Magic Fudge and Magic Gourmet. Made of the finest chocolate, The Magic Brownies Collection is made extra special for the palatable. It is nicely wrapped, complete with a burgundy ribbon and a personalized gift card, making it a suitable ideal Christmas gift for loved ones, friends and business associates. The Magic Brownies Collection available in select Fruit Magic stores and Fruit Magic Fitness Fine outlets. Call 3646027 or 3645821, visit www.fruitmagic.com.

Holiday party packs

DELIBRANDS OFFERS SIX PARTY PACKS THAT YOU CAN MIX and match. The Dagupeno Chips and Dip are comes with thinly sliced steamed bagoong with a choice of Egg Mayo, Yema Onion Mayo or Pandesal Cheese Dip. An assortment of Classic Canapés, Premium Canapés, Premium Mini Tarts and Mini Fruit Tarts are available in trays of 12's and 25's. The Mini Gourmet Clubs feature whole wheat, duck rice and carne asada buns filled with beef, cream cheese, chicken and mango or Christmas buns and sweet pineapple. Call 6429011.

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Business can be simple

Homemade specialties for holiday gifts

ELSEREDO RESTAURANT AND PASTELERIA Tantrado chefs are offering homemade specialties for gifts to family, friends and customers.

They are packed in Gold or Silver totes, silk bags with the Tantrado logo at P1,500 and P1,000, respectively.

The Gold Tote is filled with a bottle of Rioja red or white wine, a spicy chorizo/salt with spanish a pouch of Lavosh Bar bread, a pack of puff pastry bread sticks with parmesan cheese and Farmer's Carrot Walnut loaf topped with cream cheese icing. The Silver tote also contains a bottle of Rioja red or white wine, duck liver pate in cup, a rapper-wood money and a rich Dove-Guinness loaf.

Three types of Paella are available: Tantrado, mixed meats and seafood. Mixed meats, all seafood, and Encolao, salted red fish, in family (for six) or party (for 10) sizes.

Vegetarian Paella is made with Mediterranean-style eggplant, zucchini, bell pepper, marinated in olive oil, herbs and peas.

Traditional Spanish dishes like Callos Madrileña and Lengua con Setsa also come in party and family sizes. Other dishes are Roast Beef, Leg of Lamb, Leg of Ham, Roast Turkey with fruit-nuts and brown rice stuffing, Norwegian Salmon baked in fresh dill and hollandaise.

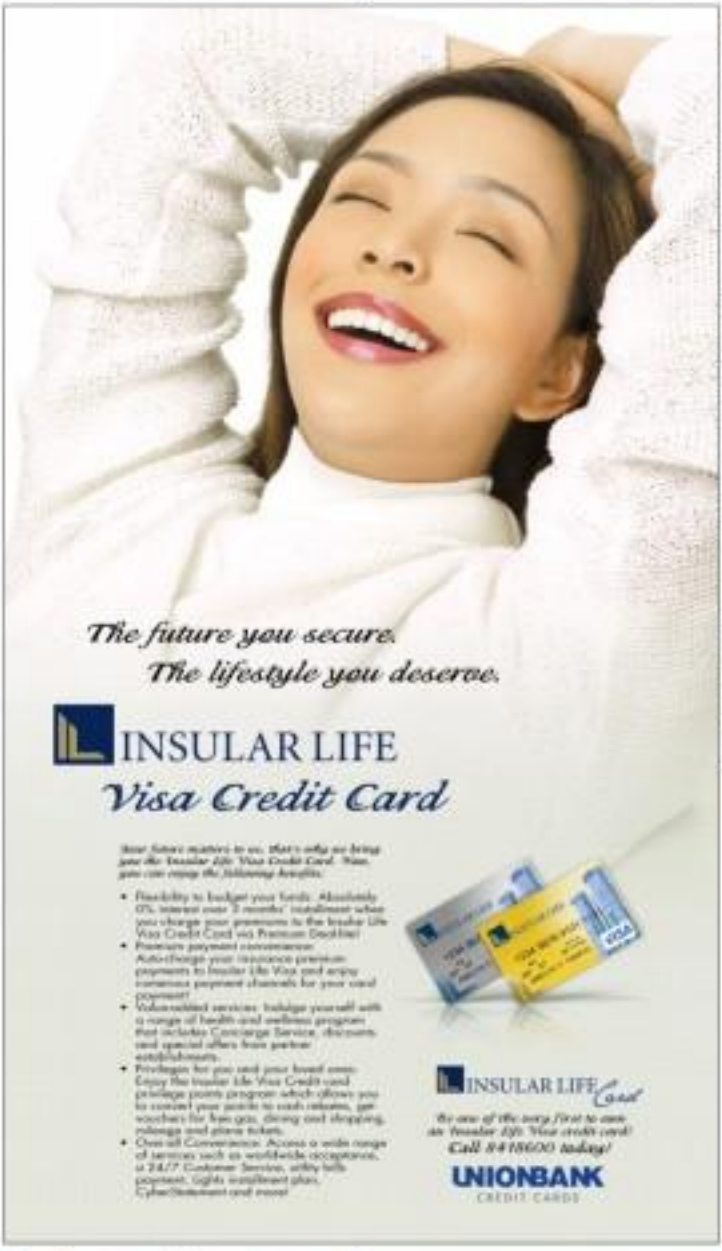
Other gift ideas are Duck Liver Pate in ceramic jar and Spicy Chorizo/Salt Spanish delicacy in jar, olive oil and bacon.

Tantrado's bakeshop offers breads, pastries and cakes. They include ensaymadas, empanadas, biscuits, buchi-buchi, fruit bars, caramel bars, choco banana loaf, Farmer's Carrot Walnut loaf, Spiced Apple loaf and Peruvian Caramel cake.

Specialized breads weighing a kilo each include Egg Monay, Cheese Pandesito Twist (P130), and Baguio. Lavosh is a flat crunchy bread flavored with oregano, paprika or black sesame with ginger.

Other items available are ham and sausage.

Tantrado Christmas Breads 2007 is available at branches, tel. nos 3272674-75, 3272343; Mercedit at Metropolitan Museum of Manila, 526-1569 or 5211117; Café Tantrado SM Makati, 8186760; Panaderia Tantrado, Gateway Atrium Center, 9133330; Café Tantrado, SM North Edsa, The Block, 9996-3271307; Café Tantrado, Serendra, 8560947; Panaderia Tantrado, Alabang Town Center, 0917-8455585; Panaderia Tantrado, Festival Mall, 8926-8688703; and Tantrado Restaurant and Wine Bar, Westgate, Alabang, 7711276, 7711782.



Baskets of holiday goodies

NO DON'T SAID TO WORRY about the Christmas cash with Golden Gate Supermarket's affordable Christmas packages.

Golden Gate offers six packages ranging from P500 to P5,000. You can also make your own Christmas package. Choose from their extensive local Christmas goodies like Magnolia Queso de Bola, DM Fiesta Fruit Cocktail, Old Prue Juice, Royal Spaghetti, Rose's Ruti-shaped, ham and many more. Shoppers who spend P600 or more get a Dee Fruit—a multipurpose container.

Golden Gate Supermarket is at St. Francis Square Ortigas Center. Reservation 2509895, 045-7413822 or 0922-8222131.

LIFESTYLE

This delicious slab of beef will be a welcome addition to Noche Buena fare

PHOTO: Rio Rivas

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

Prime addition to the Noche Buena spread

MORE FROM LOG: LOG, DIST, MORE, ads have, this, this, another bulkhaps on bank, getting a better "banking" than my mate liking who will not be an thing until the 20th!

After a long absence, the first shipment of the most elegant of beef cuts, home-it US prime rib, is in town, making it in time for Noche Buena!

So, did our cases wrapped in imported towels inside bulkhaps bonus but in crates, ensuring accurately supply-where, over and wherever we want.

So how does one make perfect roast beef? First, there are facts and techniques provided by the United States Meat Export Federation and my recipe.

Our way of satisfying you and all those dear to you a Merry Christmas! May the delicious slab of beef bring you the immeasurable joy that only good food brings!

Maligayang Pasko po!

Prime Rib Roast facts and techniques

"Prime rib" means that it comes from the beef rib section, which contains the least connective tissue, and the word "prime" is generally the top or highest grade of meat and contains the most marbling effect, both of which make it the most juicy and tender meat cut.

"Because beef rib cuts are more tender, 'dry heat' roasting is preferred. This means you do not cover or add liquid, which is called 'moist heat' cooking, used to tenderize tougher cuts of meat.

"There are several methods for cooking a beef rib roast. There is the slow method where the oven temperature is set around 200-225°F and the meat is cooked at a rate of 23-26 minutes per pound.

"The second and probably the most popular, is using a medium heat of 325°F and cooking for 17-20 minutes per pound. All other method is a searing method where the roast is cooked at 450°F for 25-30 minutes and then at 325°F for 13-15 minutes per pound or until the meat thermometer reaches 5°F under desired temperatures. This is because the internal temperature will continue to rise about 5°F after it is removed from the oven." (Medium rare temperature range is 150-160°F)

General roasting guidelines

"Place the roast in a shallow roasting pan and allow it to 'rest' out of the refrigerator for 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 450°F. Combine the remaining ingredients. Rub the meat surface with olive oil mixture.

"Place the roast in a preheated oven for 15 minutes or until the roast begins to brown. This will seal the roast and seal the juices. Reduce the heat to 350°F and continue cooking 20-32 minutes per pound for a lesser to more.

"A meat thermometer is needed to test the degree of doneness. Remove the roast when the thermometer reads 5°F below the desired doneness, and allow meat to rest for 30 minutes before carving at room temperature."

How I do my Prime Rib

Many recipes and procedures work equally well in making the perfect roast. This is how I do mine and it works wonders for me.

I do my prime rib two ways. The first is what I call a basic roast. I start with an 8-lb to 10-lb of bone-in prime rib. If you ask me this is the best way to enjoy the flavor of good meat. I like it best rubbed with just coarse sea salt (1½ tbsp), preferably *fleur de sel* (Espina salt works wonders, too), freshly cracked pepper (black and green) (1 tbsp each) or 2 tbsp black), and 1½ tbsp mustard powder (aids in giving you perfectly golden crust). Rub liberally on to the meat surface.

For those who like garlic and herbs, I would brush on 6 k clad with ½ tbsp of olive oil and rub ½ cup of garlic paste. To this coarse sea salt, 2 tbsp freshly cracked pepper corn, 1½ tbsp mustard powder, 4 tbsp of fresh mixed minced herbs (rosemary, basil, oregano, parsley, thyme) or 2 tsp mixed dried herbs, on to the meat surface.

I would roast my meat covered with foil on a pre-heated 350°F oven and decide cooking time by computing 22 minutes per pound. After ½ of the cooking time has elapsed, I would remove the foil and continued to roast until my meat surface is golden.

Then I take the beef out and let it rest before carving. I would rather undercook my meat, for once it is overdone, there is no reversing the process. Besides, there is always a pan to have your beef well done- the why would you want to do it?

Pan for brown roasting pan. Return pan over medium heat. Add 2-3 cups beef stock or de-

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A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNELA. AVETRIA

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Flame's start
5 Comic observations
9 Death notices
14 Printed producers
15 Human/Chicano equivalent
16 U.K.'s capital
17 Half MARRIED
18 Bow maker
19 Pluto satellite
20 Name of John Carmichael's son
22 "High Noon" star
24 Half of the start?
25 Carrying letters
26 Leader Gaumi
27 Unlawfully claimed ownership
28 Tending to
31 Part 2 of start
35 Comes in rival
37 Half-starts "___ Wood"
38 Rubik's maker's brother
42 Part 3 of start
46 Hippocratic ___
47 Bachelder's Lost' star
48 Star of the PBA
50 Go wrong
51 Pity
53 Chip shop
54 Sort of spirit
55 Lose heavy parts
57 Engineer
59 Champion skaters
64 "La Traviata" composer
65 Have nothing
66 Wonderful Philippines
67 Twelve, past
70 Canada
71 Hawaiian's kid

DOWN
1 Rumor at least as upset
2 Supplement
3 Pregnant-mare judge
4 Songwriter Berry
5 Drug option
6 Norman and Lorna
7 Santa Barbara's motion picture
8 Masterpieces
9 Hand beat
10 Cooking contestant
11 English port
12 Ancient Greek cross
13 Source of a weak tea
21 Bowl boy
23 Bowl-shaped
27 Lose on stocks
28 Medieval note
29 Jazz drummer Blakey
30 Ring
32 Greenwood
33 Lose heart
34 Lose mass
36 Shuck out
39 Pass on bail
40 Subsequently
43 Rules for
44 Lose intensity
45 Rural residents
49 Like Fuller's dome
52 Sort of Justin
56 Tricky question
58 Mixed fabric
61 Computer operator
62 Optical storage system
63 Classic car

By Alan P. Shelmerdine
Huntington Beach, CA

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You like to keep things. You have dynamic energy and enthusiasm for life. You're outspoken and fearless; you demand respect. Weak, fearful people irritate you. You're a natural leader. You're also very creative, energy and have powers. You excel, brilliantly for your goals, and you rally you to so productive. You pay dues to accomplish results and financial success.

Birthstone: Pink Ruby; zodiac: Cara Delevingne, Sandra Bullock, Chad Michael Murray, Jessica Simpson

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You have a lot of energy and ambition. Think about travel, publishing, education or even about religions and political issues. You're willing to take a risk or make a change here.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You have the benefit of learning or with someone who is a natural leader. Be sure you're paying attention because today it's a winning situation for you.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a good day for experimenting with new ideas, with partners and close friends. You feel enthusiastic and outgoing. You're interested in ways to have a good time in your favorite way.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You're not the type to worry or work at it, but you have the ability to make you understand what others are feeling for.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You can be quite successful today if you work in service, health or with professional work. Be hospitable, helpful to others. Things can go your way.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is a good day for self-reflection, meditation, prayer and spiritual pursuits. Emotions or issues from the past may be

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You can be quite successful today. Be willing to work hard and be willing to compromise. You have a strong sense of duty, and you're willing to do what's necessary to get ahead. Emotional circumstances involving

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You have a good day for business and commerce. Be alert to opportunities to gain a good deal for yourself. Reaching out to others and your own time will benefit you today.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You feel enthusiastic, upbeat and optimistic. You're ready to take on new tasks today. It's a "full, money moves" kind of day. Your ideas are well received, and you're able to get your point across. Others think you're wise.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Attitude is important. You will please your boss today if you're thoughtful in a sensitive kind of way. You're counting your blessings and feeling grateful.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You excel in activities, classes, conferences, meetings and conversations with friends and in group activities. You feel encouraged about your future.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Emotions, psychic matters and you are important today. Your intuition is at an all-time high. You're quite in tune with others and have a clear sense of what's going on around you. Because you have the imagination today, you can make work plan will be right.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

	3	8	1					
							4	
		7			5			3
			3			1		8
7				4				2
9		5			7			
4			9			8		
	6							
					6	3	5	

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

1	3	6	2	9	8	5	4	7
9	2	7	1	5	4	6	8	3
4	8	5	6	3	7	1	2	9
7	1	4	5	6	2	3	9	8
8	5	3	4	8	9	7	6	1
2	6	9	8	7	1	4	3	5
6	7	2	9	4	5	8	1	3
5	9	1	3	2	6	4	7	8
3	4	8	7	1	3	9	5	6

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Recipes for Yuletide feast

SAN MIGUEL PUREFOODS Culinary Center shares a few recipe ideas to make the holiday spread more festive.

For more recipes visit www.sanmiguelpurefood.com.

Christmas Stuffed Chicken

Ingredients:
1 piece Magnolia Chicken Inasim Boneless Whole Chicken
Stuffing:
¼ c Chef Creme Classic
½ c Magnolia Best Fruits Jam Apple Cinnamon
1 c apples, coarsely chopped
½ c pitted prunes, coarsely chopped
½ c walnuts, coarsely chopped
¼ c white onion, chopped
¼ c celery, chopped
1/3 c raisins soaked in
2 tbsp water
2 c white bread, cubed
2 tsp salt
½ tsp pepper

Combine all ingredients for stuffing in a big bowl. Mix well. Stuff boneless chicken with the prepared mixture and surround the chicken with the remaining stuffing. Tie drumsticks legs together and bake for 1 hour at 350°F.

Serves 10-12

CHRISTMAS Stuffed Chicken

Fiesta Ham Canapés

Ingredients:
½ c Don Miguel Cayuna Negra
1 tbsp honey
1 pc mini baguette, sliced thinly
50 g cream cheese
200 g Purefoods Fiesta Ham, thinly sliced
Dill Mayo:
½ c mayonnaise
2 tbsp dill sprigs, chopped
Purefoods cayenne TIDBITS

In a bowl, combine cayuna negra and honey. Dip sliced baguette. Bake for 12 minutes.

In another bowl, mix together mayonnaise and dill. Refrigerate.

To assemble: Spread dill mayo on toasts. Top it with lettuce and ham.

Serves 2-4

FIESTA Ham Canapés

Pork Roll Roast

Ingredients:
1 pc whole, boneless, skinless Monterey Pork Liempo (about 2.5 kilos)
1 tbsp rosemary
½ tbsp thyme
3 tbsp prepared mustard
4 tbsp Magnolia Hard oil
1 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
Green Peppercorn Gravy:
2 tbsp Magnolia Gold Butter
2 tbsp Purefoods Baron All-purpose Flour
1 c beef broth
2 tsp liquid seasoning
1 tbsp coarsely ground green peppers or black peppers

Combine rosemary, thyme, mustard and oil in a small bowl. Rub this mixture over both sides of the liempo. Season both sides with salt and pepper. Roll the meat with the fat side out and secure with a string. Transfer rolled meat onto a roasting pan and cover with a piece of Glad Aluminum Foil. Bake in a 350°F oven for 1 hour then remove foil and bake again for another 20 minutes. Serve immediately.

To make green peppercorn gravy: In a pan, melt butter, whisk in flour, and slowly add broth. Season with liquid seasoning and add green peppers. Let simmer for 5 minutes. Makes 1 cup, serve on the side.

Serves 8-10

Wild Mushroom Tomato Pasta

Wild Mushroom Tomato Pasta

Ingredients:
400 g spaghetti
300 g Purefoods Honey-cured Bacon, chopped
½ c onion, chopped
2 tbsp garlic, chopped
1 can button mushroom, sliced
300 g shiitake mushroom, sliced
350 g Purefoods Cooked Ham, cubed
2 cups stewed tomatoes, pureed
50 g parmesan cheese
Cook pasta according to directions.

In a sauté pan, sauté bacon until almost brown. Set aside. Using the bacon oil, sauté onion and garlic. Add mushrooms. Sauté for 2 minutes. Then add ham and bacon. Add pureed tomatoes. Toss pasta with the sauce and top with parmesan cheese.

Serves 4.

New Baby Back Ribs

PANCAKE HOUSE UNVEILS this holiday season its Baby Back Ribs, served half or full slab. It comes with Pancake House's own sauce—a choice between hickory barbecue and maple sauce. Selected side dishes are available to choose from. You can select two from among mashed potato, coleslaw, potato salad, corn and carrots, rice, and French Fries. Pancake House is offering what New Yuletide Treats—10 food packages suitable for parties and other large gatherings. Each package has a mix of new offerings and classic favorites. Yuletide Treats are exclusive to for takeout and delivered. Visit www.pancakehouse.com.ph, e-mail phi@pancakehouse.biz, call 813-6728.

High Cholesterol?

A Healthy Stomach Helps Prevent Heart Disease

Christmas is usually the time when you enjoy scrumptious foods that get high in cholesterol. However, high cholesterol level may lead to stroke or heart attack.

Give the New Year with good health. Fight back with C-Lium Fibre!

C-Lium Fibre is made from 100% natural psyllium husk, probably the best dietary fiber in the world. It effectively binds with the cholesterol excreted in bile acids and flushes it out of your body before it is absorbed in the bloodstream. That's why a daily intake of C-Lium Fibre, together with a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, can help you maintain a healthy heart.

Protect your heart this holiday season. Make C-Lium Fibre your daily habit!

C-Lium® FIBRE

Passion for Health LOVE FOR LIFE

Holiday dessert

CAP FOUR HOUSE PANNA FEAST WITH this easy-to-do panna cotta from Ysabel Ortigas Gilligan.

Vanilla Panna Cotta

250 ml/1 c whipping cream
250 ml/1 c fresh milk
75 g or 6 tbsp sugar
20 g vanilla
3 pc (or 3 tsp of gelatin powder) gelatin leaves

Mix milk and sugar in a bowl until dissolved. Put the cream in a pot and bring to a boil. Dissolve the gelatin in cold water and put in the hot cream mixture. Afterward, pour and combine the cream in the milk mixture.

Pour in desired cups or preferred mold and cool to form the creamy dessert. When ready, top with sliced fruits and Ysabel jam.

Ysabelen Gilligan is at 2/F Wynsum Corporate Plaza, 221 F Ortigas Jr. Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City; 6365555, www.ysabelenofficial.com.

VANILLA Panna Cotta

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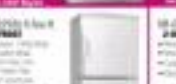

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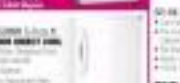

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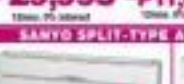

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3 BATANES
4 EASTERN PROMISES
5 RENDITION
6 HOOD of HORROR

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From page E1

film lab," explains Andrew. "Loan, say hours, post expenses so, we established a booking system for the film first. We offer scheduling options producers."

Once producers agree to a certain playing schedule, they are contractually obligated to "deliver the material for processing on an agreed upon date. If they fail to meet the deadline, they have to go back to the end of the line."

Another reason, "Most producers started shooting earlier this year (compared to last year). So a shortened post [schedule] was added a premium that if materials were submitted early, we could deliver the films copies early too."

Strict ideal

A bottleneck is inevitable if all the materials come in at the same time, Andrew warns. So, a strict schedule is imperative.

"The average order for a film opening on Dec. 25 is 60 copies," he relates. "Yet a film set on Jan. 1, the average is 40."

For "Enteng," the promotional film has top posters to produce "between 40 and 60 copies," he says.

Printing new 300 copies within two weeks sounds daunting, but Andrew believes that Optimodus can deliver the goods.

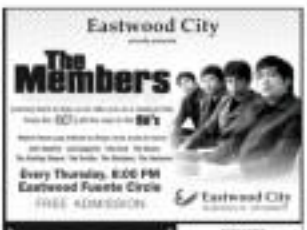
Faster machine

It was precisely the anticipation of the MMFF leaderboard that made Optimodus decide to import a new positive processing machine from Australia last October.

"We know from the old machine in QM, which can only create out with 20 copies a day. Now, we can churn out 50 to 60 copies daily," Andrew says.

Soon, Andrew can become a thing of the past, he says.

Still, that is if producers submit on time.



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Iza Calzado's star also rises

NIGHT LIGHTS OF TOP YOUNG FEMALE movie stars look their luckiest in the likes of Judy Ann Santos, Angel Locsin, Bea Alonzo, Sam Concepcion and Angelica Panganiban. This year, however, it's time to cite another newcomer: Iza Calzado, first tabbed as the big-time urban lead role in the Wolfgang Bodison chiller, "The Echo," opposite Jesse Bradford.

Actually, "The Echo" is the American remake of Tom Lorenzo' spooky "Sigaw," which impressed US festival goers so much that it had been shot again in Bangkok for international release, again with Lorenzo directing.

Iza plays the female lead role in "Sigaw" and her performance was deemed so good that she was tapped to top-bill the movie's US version as well.

Her lead role in "The Echo" has given her enough clout to finally be taken seriously by local movie buffs. At

Nestor U. Torre

VIEWFINDER

too tall, "going Hollywood" is a popular pipe dream to these parts, and clinching a lead role in a US production is a cue from fate a local talent.

But "The Echo" is by no means Iza's only claim to fame. Of late, she's been starring in one Filipino movie after another, the most recent of which are "Blame," "Resurrecta," and the forthcoming URIAH entry "Desperadoes."

Int'l projection

Iza's new suit is her "international" projection, her shaky tactic futures nothing her a natural for Asian, Latino, ethnic and modern-woman roles.

There, variety-wide range of possibilities, so Iza is better placed than many other local talents for a more varied range of performance offers, both local and abroad.

On point of acting, Iza has also perceptively improved through the years. Early on in her career, her performances tended to be too "modest" in the direction to the meaning. But her portrayal of the lesbi lead role in the current comedy "Batuna," indicates that she's learned how to endure and meet her acting instincts.

Pilandi is not to say that she's one of the best young actresses we have. She still has a lot to learn about going the extra mile and making work truly her own.

The requires a sensitive and savvy infusion of personal insight and emotional conviction that isn't all that evident yet. Still, we're acquainted with Iza's improvement as a thespian, so hopes are high that she will truly come into her own next year.

As for Iza's dollar participation in "Desperados," it may not be to spy, because she replaces Dawn Zulueta in the movie about "desperate" women (inspired by TV's "Desperate Housewives"?).

Wrong replacement

The "desperate" lot may would suggest that the veteran leonard shouldn't be all that young, and in fact Dawn used be a decade older than Iza, so her younger replacement may not be all that right for her role.

But, we're prepared to wait and see, and hope that, by some miraculous feat of acting proving/direction, Iza will wonder-ous from mere and wonderful.

Still, we must point out that, as Iza is sliding into the big time, she needs to choose her follow-up roles with greater judgement, and with her eye on the long haul.

Once a star breaks into the winner circle the stakes are much higher.